290 PLAYSTATION 4 & VITA GAMES RATED

PLAY

ISSUE 275



PS VR

20 LAUNCH GAMES REVIEWED

CALL OF DUTY

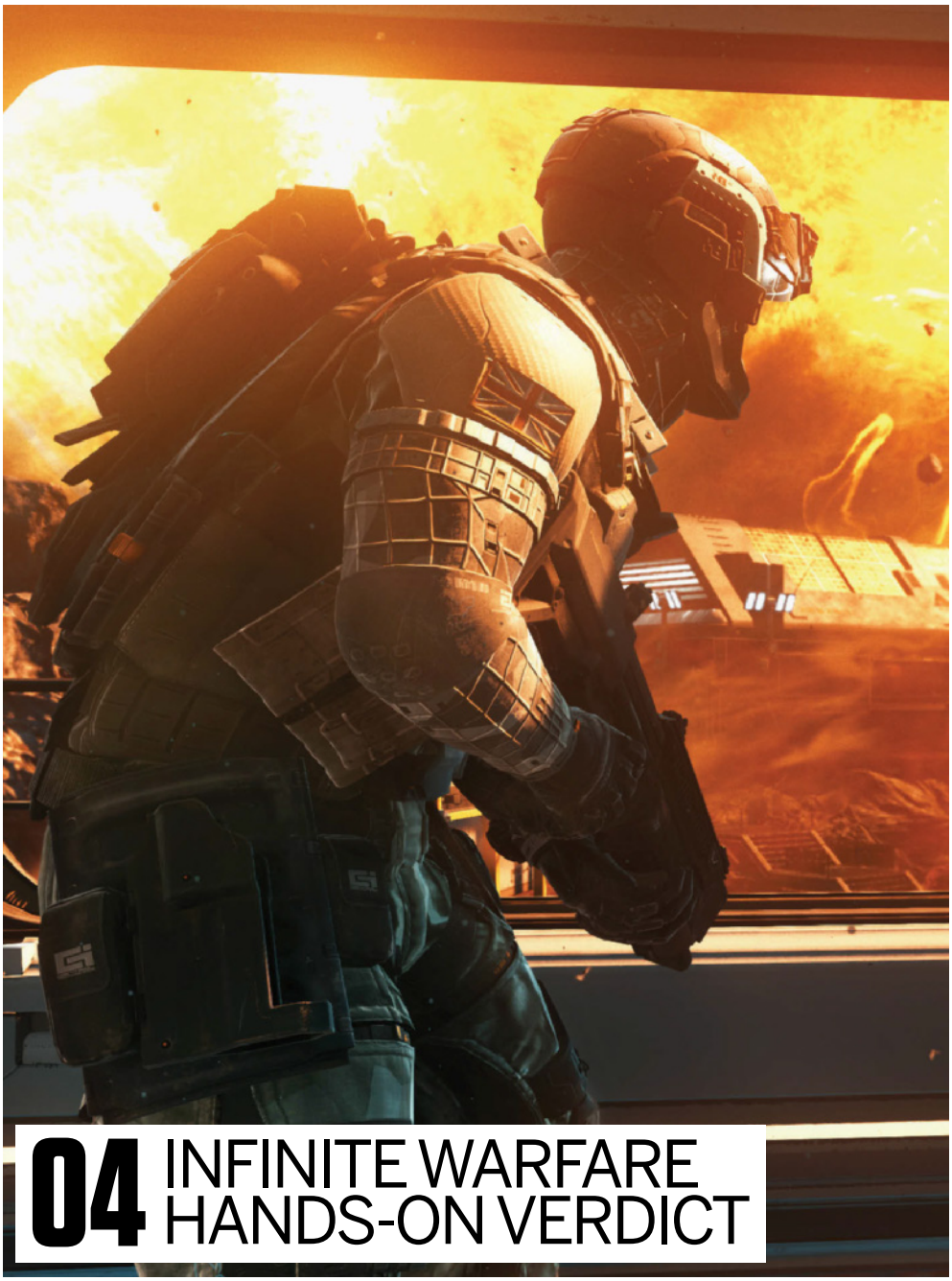
INFINITE WARFARE

HANDS-ON VERDICT ON THE BIGGEST FPS OF THE YEAR

PS4 PS VR PS3 VITA PSN

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A source of infinite wisdom in the world of PlayStation



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ONE ASPECT OF VR that I never really gave much consideration until we had one in the office was the physical side of things. It's not that the headset is heavy or awkward – quite the opposite in fact, it's light and comfy. It's not the flapping, flailing and waggling of the Move controllers, either. Years of playing Wii games has me well prepared in that regard. No, it's something else entirely and something short play sessions at events and studios never even hinted at – when developers get things right, VR does such a good job of tricking your brain that you can actually feel tired from moving around in a videogame. Well, I did, anyway. Once.

RIGS was the game in question, the weird thing being that your character in the game doesn't even move. It's the mech suit you load yourself into that does all the legwork. But confused by this new experience, my body put two and two together and came up with three – my eyes had seen multiple rapid tours of arenas, my heart rate had risen as matches grew tight and clutch plays were made and my brain interpreted that as a decent day of exercise, so I woke up the following morning to a pair of inexplicably achy legs.

It was all purely psychosomatic, of course. My legs are (and were) fine... this was just my body's way of dealing with something it didn't understand and feeding my brain what it thought was the correct response to the things it assumed it had done. Now that I'm more experienced in VR experiences in all kinds of flavours, I've not had anything similar happen since, so please don't read this as a cautionary tale but as an amusing one – no harm, no foul. That VR is capable of such mental trickery speaks of its quality of immersion, but man, that was one hell of a weird experience...

Enjoy the issue and I'll see ya online.



LUKE ALBIGÉS
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@LukemonMGJ
PSN: PorthMinster

CURRENTLY PLAYING
Destiny: Rise Of Iron

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Your one-stop guide to this month's futuristic gaming lineup

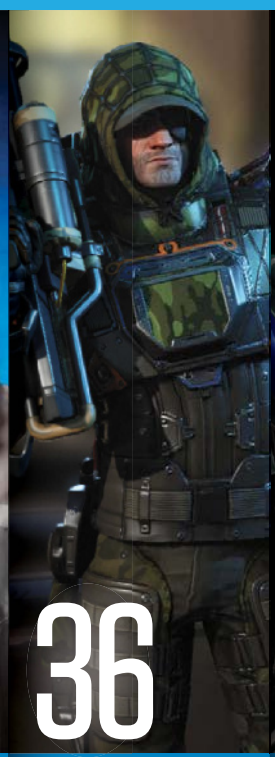
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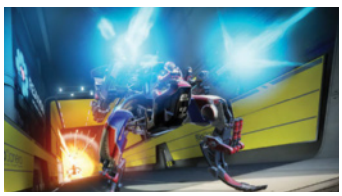


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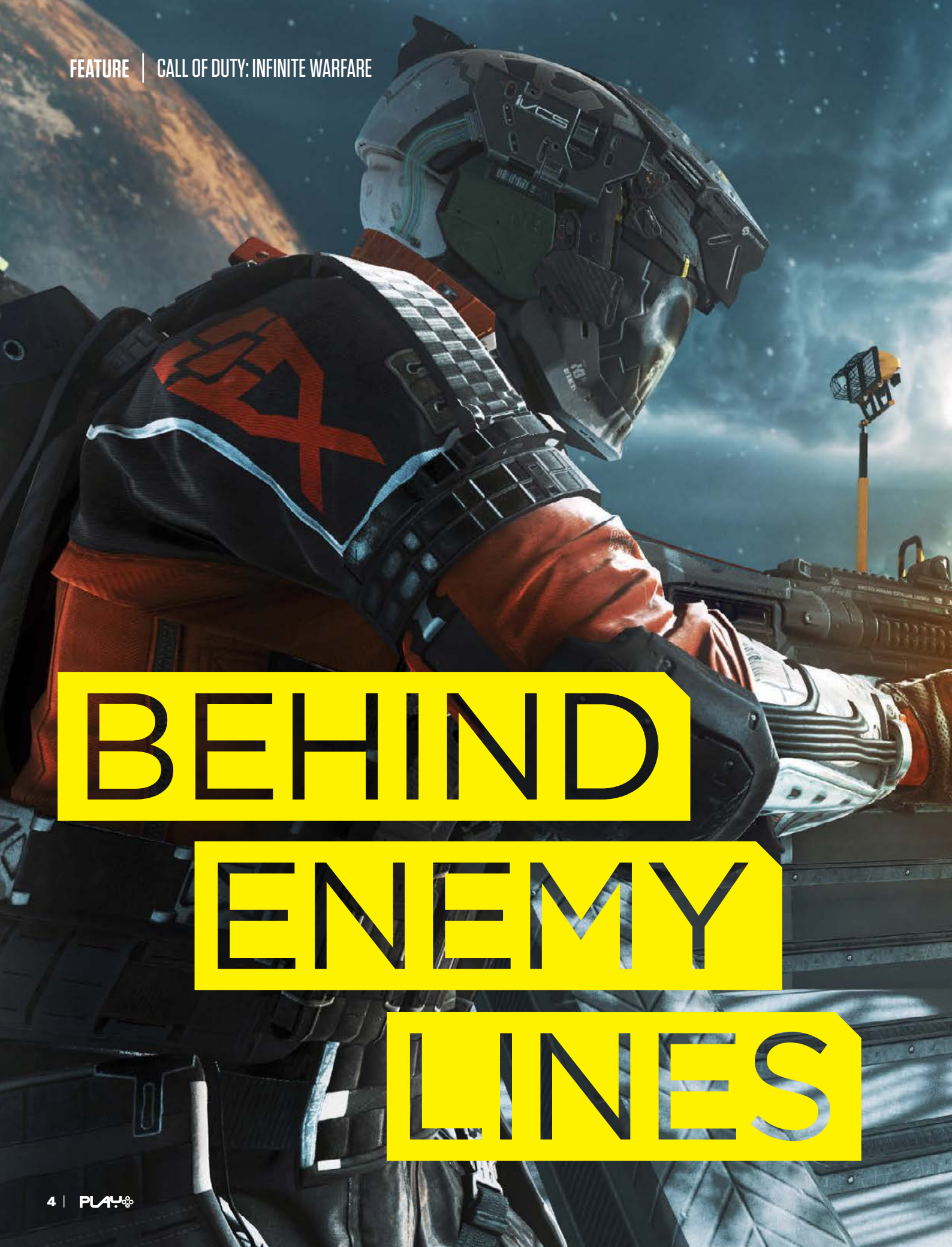
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BEHIND ENEMY LINES



EMBEDDED WITH PRO PLAYERS, YOUTUBE SENSATIONS AND RAVENOUS CALL OF DUTY FANS, **PLAY** GOES TO GREAT LENGTHS TO BRING YOU THE LATEST INTEL ON **INFINITE WARFARE**, BECOMING SWALLOWED IN THE PURE CHAOS OF THE CALL OF DUTY WORLD LEAGUE FINALS IN THE PROCESS

YOU HAVEN'T TRULY LIVED UNTIL YOU'VE ATTENDED AN EVENT DEDICATED ENTIRELY TO *CALL OF DUTY*. It's a swirling, sweaty maelstrom of testosterone; a contained cultural calamity where blood-curdling screams can be heard echoing from areas unseen, the distress unknown; an opportunity to lose your bearings among a sea of black hats, each burning with the vivid green Monster branding – as if *these kids* need any more taurine pumping through their veins.

Okay, so they aren't kids, per se, but it is all too easy to feel the cruel grasp of time in this particular environment. Surrounded by *Call Of Duty: Black Ops III* pro players from around the globe, 32 teams of four are all fighting for a slice of a $2 million prize pie.

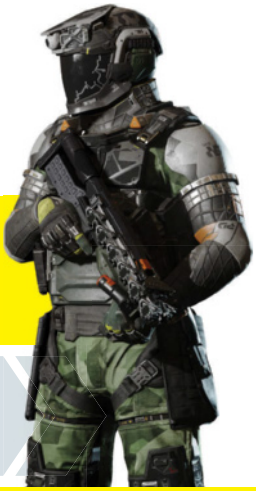
Then there are the rock stars of the industry, the YouTube and Twitch elite that have touched down in Los Angeles, California to cause chaos with a camera and a catchphrase or ten. They cannot move a muscle without being mobbed by waves of adoring fans.

The most impressive group, however, are the FPS pilgrims. Thousands of weary travellers that have paid out of pocket to travel in to Inglewood's iconic arena, The Forum, to attend Call Of Duty XP 2016 – to get their hands on *Infinite Warfare*, to cheer on their favourite eSports teams and to catch a glimpse of superstar streamers.

Does it sound like chaos? Well now, that's because it is. But that's the terrifying genius of COD XP 2016 – it's the only place in the world where your expectation (and preconceptions) of *Call Of Duty* players will ever be simultaneously confirmed and contested. Dropping in behind enemy lines, being embedded among the chaos was revealing – at times, even startling. Given the reputation of the infamously hostile player base, would you be surprised to learn that COD XP could sometimes be a hotbed of outlandish behaviour?

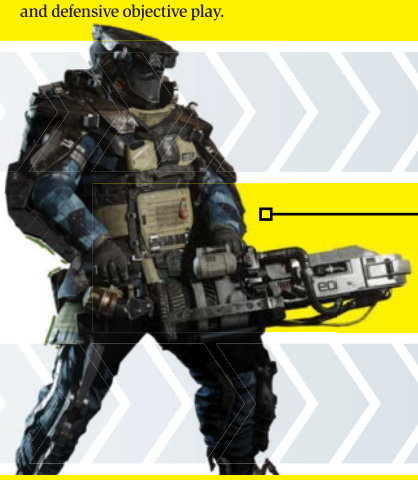
Within just an hour of arriving at The Forum, we ducked out of the hot California sun and took sanctuary in a bathroom. There we were, stood taking care of business, until a YouTuber sauntered in, camera held aloof, and unzipped his trousers with his free hand. Paralysed in confusion we stood there, motionless and silent. He continued to multitask in a manner we've never quite seen before. "Thanks for watching guys, now don't forget to Like and Subscribe," he says with one hand trained on »

COMBAT RIGS DETAILED



WARFIGHTER

One of the first Rigs Infinity Ward designed, Warfighter, is *Infinite Warfare*'s mid-range soldier. Designed to be the most accessible of the lot, his Trait options favour offensive and defensive objective play.



MERC

Designed for those that love to sprint around with an LMG, dishing out max damage, Merc is a defence focused Rig that'll be best used while defending Hardpoints and Capture points.



PHANTOM

For those that believe camping is a legitimate strategy, Phantom is the Rig for those that enjoy playing stealthily. If you want to avoid detection, sit back from combat and look for those headshots, Phantom is the Rig for you.



SYNAPTIC

Focused towards closer-quarters combat, Synaptic is brutal up close. This Rig's Payload transforms you into a robot-dog, a murderous robot dog, which lets you bound across the map and insta-kill anything in your way.



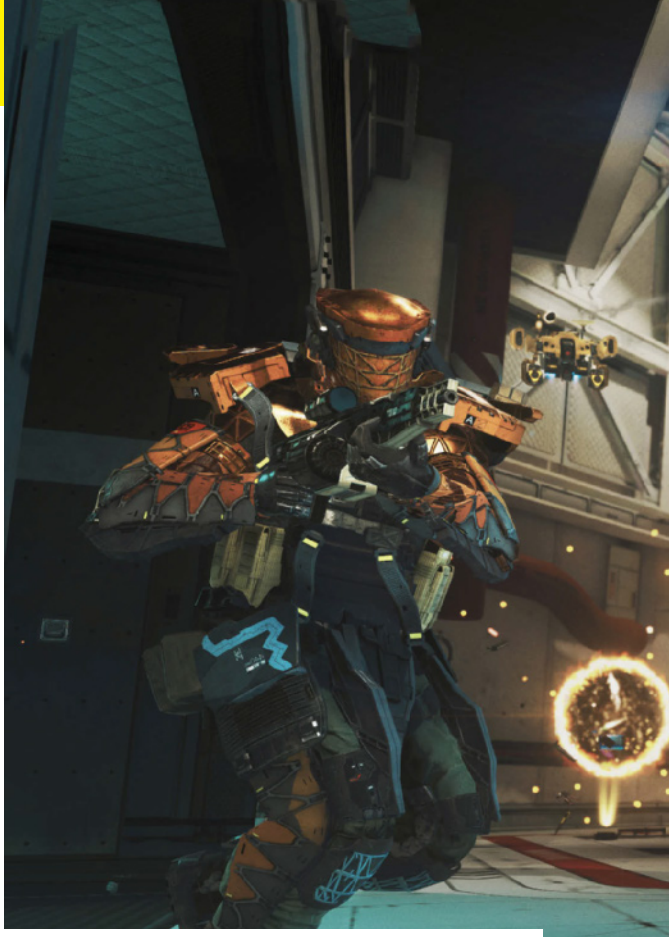
FTL

If you love to be in the thick of the action, you may want to give the FTL Rig a try. Designed to get you into combat as quickly as possible, FTL comes equipped with a Trait that lets you warp jump towards enemies.



STRYKER

This Rig is designed for high-level play, particularly if you're heading into games with a team around you. The Stryker Rig is built around support tactics, best used in conjunction with other Rigs to weaken the enemy team.



his camera and the other... well, do we need to go into detail? The smile never wavered once.

This was day one of COD XP 2016. We still had four more days to go.

FLAMING, IRL

Across the weekend, COD XP would play host to the Call Of Duty Championship finals – a tournament that sees teams competing for a $800,000 top prize – as well as the multiplayer reveals for *Infinite Warfare* and *Modern Warfare Remastered*. Both would be playable at the event, as too would a unique PSVR experience, *Zombies In Spaceland*, and a few fun activities such as Nuketown-themed paintball. Basically, if you're a fan of *Call Of Duty*, there is no better place to be than COD XP.

Here's the thing, though: the Championships didn't get off to a perfect start. The PlayStation Network has gone down, forcing 13 games to be delayed. Players are staring at their phones blankly, a sea of blue error screens behind them – some were just moments from playing their bracket qualifying games. Others are taking to Twitter to complain as Twitch chats and Reddit pages are set ablaze with anger from fans. All anybody can do is wait and/or complain.

But then three hours pass and players are becoming incensed. Out in the hot Californian sun, you might come across members of famous North American pro team OpTic Gaming, pacing around and informing a weary-looking manager that the delay "was bullshit." They have a right to complain, of course – the later the games were pushed, the less time they would have to rest up ahead of a weekend of ultra-intense best-of-five elimination games.

Inside the arena, however, and tempers were beginning to flare. "Do your f***ing job," one pro player, dressed in a red jersey, is shouting at a clearly exhausted event organiser. Here you begin to see a mental picture made real; that of the angst-ridden *Call Of Duty* player, rude, brash and loud.



■ While there were a lot of great players at CODXP, our pick for MVP has to be Splyce's Benjamin "Bance" Bance, the engineer behind many of the team's best comebacks and plays in their last two games.

She explains, clearly not for the first time, that she isn't a PSN magician, but the person responsible for seating pro players ahead of their games. He stomps off, kicking a chair as he turns, and the organiser can do nothing but shrug it off. "That's *Call Of Duty* players for you," she remarks to us with a tired smile before disappearing behind a huge stage, one that would host Snoop Dog and Wiz Khalifa in a blaze of smoke and illicit-smelling narcotics come the closing ceremony in a few short days.

LOOKING BEYOND GHOSTS

Distance yourself from the drama and there are great times to be found here. Infinity Ward has revealed the multiplayer component of *Infinite Warfare* to the public, giving us a chance to get hands-on and speak with project director Jordan Hirsh, an IW veteran of almost a decade. He's excited to see the reaction and eager to prove that the studio has what it takes to compete with the likes of DICE and Respawn in this year's ultra-competitive market. But it's difficult to talk about *Infinite Warfare* without first bringing up *Ghosts*; it's the one stain on an otherwise pristine resume.

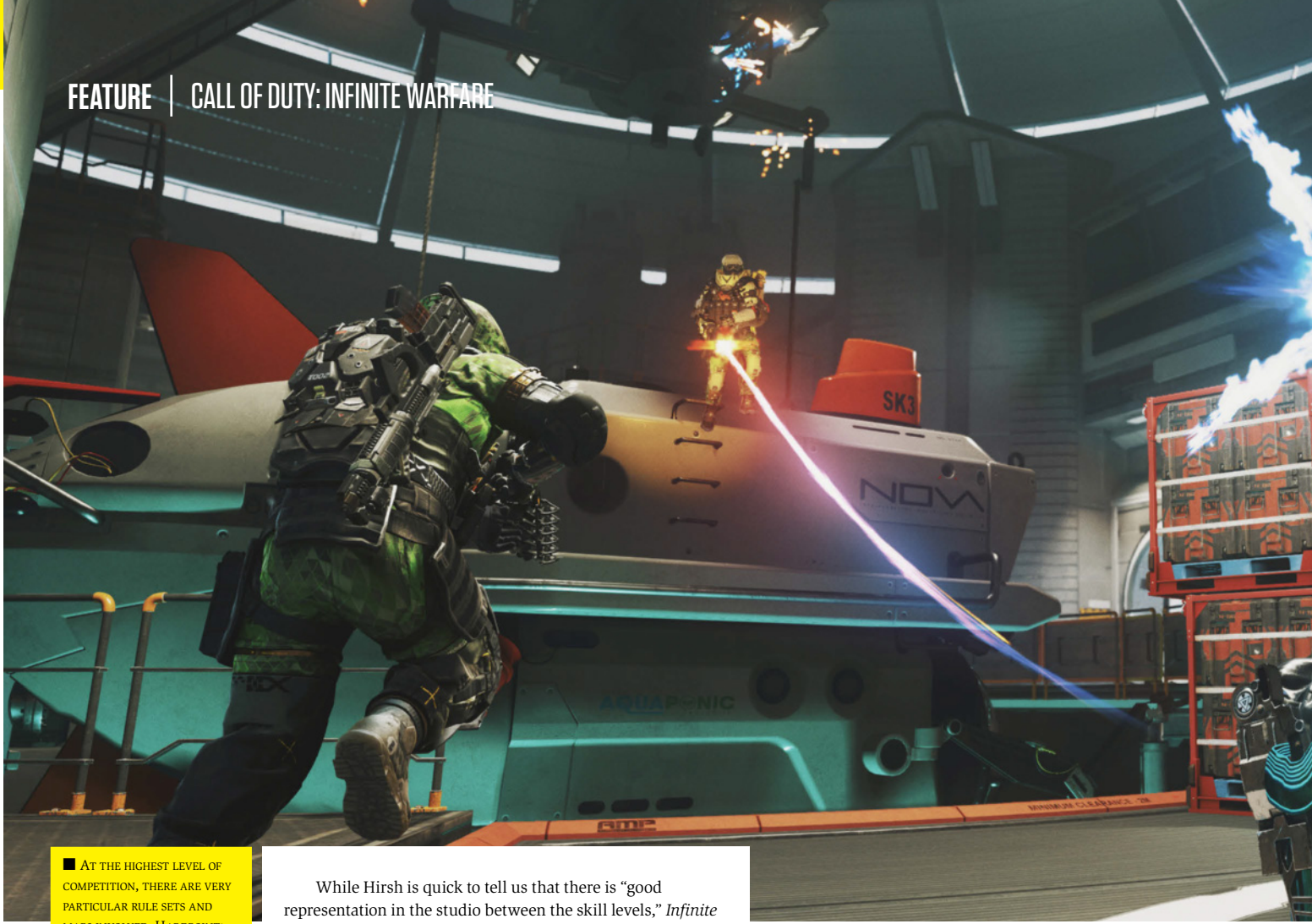
"Obviously there were mistakes, there are always mistakes in every game," says Hirsh on IW's wayward 2013 effort. "We enjoyed the game, but we see the criticism and we acknowledge it." The lessons are obvious: player visibility wasn't clear and sight lines weren't predictable enough, elements the studio is eager to correct. "By moving forward you learn from the past... we've put a lot of time and effort into making sure that we don't do it again."

Infinite Warfare is already one of the most divisive entries into the long-running *Call Of Duty* franchise, with many in the community taking issue with the studio's decision to rip the action away from the streets and instead host it among the stars. After many hours with *Infinite Warfare*, it's clear that this new direction is affording Infinity Ward the opportunity to imbue its title with a sense of freedom and fluidity, maintaining the core pillars of the franchise while striking out in a new direction. But the number one goal for Infinity Ward is to "make sure the game is fun for everybody," something of a gargantuan task as the divide between skill levels continues to increase.

"When a player is killed in the game, they should be able to learn from that experience," says Hirsh, aware that *Call Of Duty* has become more competitive than ever before. "They need to understand what happened and why it happened. When we balance we have to look at how a casual, a low-skill and a high-skill players are going to play. We have to have opportunities so that a low-skill player can run around and flank somebody and actually get a kill."

> "When a player is killed in the game, they should be able to learn from it"
>
> - JORDAN HIRSH, INFINITY WARD

Infinite Warfare, at a basic, intrinsic level, plays like a hot blend of *Black Ops III* and *Advanced Warfare* – the Specialists of the former and the movement system of the latter, with Infinity Ward's expertise shining through in the tight game mechanics for good measure. The problem is that both of these games have put a huge focus on making *Call Of Duty* fit to be an eSport, not to necessarily be a game that can be enjoyed by all. »



■ At the highest level of competition, there are very particular rule sets and maps involved. Hardpoint: Breach and Uplink are played on Evac, Fringe and Stronghold maps, while Search And Destroy is played across Fringe, Redwood, Breach, Hunted, Stronghold and Infection.

While Hirsh is quick to tell us that there is "good representation in the studio between the skill levels," *Infinite Warfare* feels even more geared to top-level play than any game that has preceded it – perhaps that's because pro players and casters have been involved in development every step of the way. They've been in the studio already, Hirsh explains to us, helping Infinity Ward with the creation of rule-sets, eSports-specific equipment changes and balancing ahead of release.

ARE THE COMBAT RIGS COMBAT READY?

At the centre of this balancing act are the all-new Combat Rigs. Built around six distinct styles of play, each of the six Rigs is outfitted with three Payload weapons – designed to boost player effectiveness and lethality in combination with the returning Pick 10 system and three unique persistent perks, called Traits. Players will be able to select one Payload and one Trait in combination to create different play styles, switching easily between them upon death to better respond to developing threats on the battlefield, *Overwatch* style; in theory, at least.

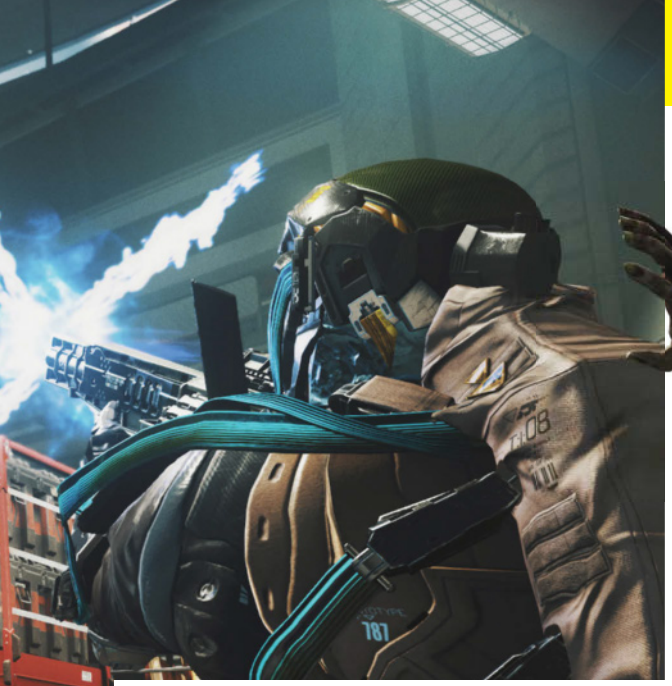
"There is a ton of content and I think it'll take players quite a while to get through it and digest it all, and understand all of the synergies that develop between all of these decisions," says Hirsh, and he isn't wrong. It's difficult to get an accurate read on the meta-game here, though that hasn't stopped us from identifying a handful of problems with the current build. The Combat Rigs have a lot in common with the Specialists of *Black Ops III*, minus the personality. To us, it felt pared back.

"I'm not sure pared back is the right term," says Hirsh. "The way we actually went around developing these is that we started looking at doing a hard class-based system, and that's initially how we determined what play styles we wanted to support with these Rigs. It became apparent to us that there wasn't enough player agency in the Rigs selection when we were forcing that class-based role. So we took a step back and we kept the Trait from that specific class-based role and then expanded them slightly to give players more choice within that prescribed play style."

We can't help but agree, a hard-class based system would be the direct antithesis of modern *Call Of Duty*, but there's still something not quite right with the Rigs. We get the impression that many may not see the benefit or understand the impact behind the specific Traits, so ineffectual did they seem – ultimately, Pick 10 is still key to unlocking your maximum lethality.

We suggest to Hirsh that perhaps each Rig should come with specific stat advantages and disadvantages, meaning that each of the six Rigs would actually lean towards different play styles – mechanical differences that would actually impact gameplay. This was discussed early on, he explains to us, though the team ultimately rejected the idea. "We initially had base statistic adjustments, but we pulled back from that and put, essentially the essence of whatever those statistical adjustments would be in those Trait decisions," Hirsh continues.

> **"There is a ton of content and I think it'll take players quite a while to get through it and digest it all"**
> **- JORDAN HIRSH, INFINITY WARD**





Right now, that isn't shining through as brightly as it should or could. The Rigs and Traits feel like incidental additions around an otherwise sublime shooter – another thing to worry about customising and managing in-game, despite the fact that you still can't edit the particulars of your Pick 10 loadout in-game (a decision that's made out of respect to the legacy of *Call Of Duty*, we're told). These feel like additions that will have very little difference to moment-to-moment play outside of the high-level competition, which given the crowd we are surrounded by, seems to be going down well enough.

The map design is tight and vertical, promoting an infectious rhythm between respawns. Gunplay is as great as ever – not that you should expect anything less from IW. Momentum is king here too, this is the fastest *COD* yet and players seem to love it. Surrounded by hundreds of them, we find a side to *COD*'s ravenous fan base we haven't seen before. There's a strong sense of camaraderie here, with groups of strangers routinely breaking out into choruses of cheers between rounds – congratulating other players on kill streaks and crazy plays; high-fiving teammates and offering words of encouragement. It was wonderful to see, a world removed from the trash talk and player-hostile environment so typically attributed to *COD*'s online component.

TAKING A BREATHER

Back at the hotel, there's a noticeable buzz of excitement and trepidation in the air. Fans of competitive *COD* are shocked to learn that OpTic Gaming, largely considered to be odds-on to win the tournament, have collapsed out of the Loser's Bracket after a thrilling game against Cloud9 – though that game was ultimately marred by reports of racist slurs being thrown from OpTic's fans towards Cloud9's Andres 'Lacefield' Lacefield.

That *COD* toxicity can be seen seeping into games all across the weekend. During one particularly impassioned round of Hardpoint, FaZe Clan's James 'Clayster' Eubanks erupts from his seat, punching his screen and begins screaming, "These guys are trash, these guys are trash" over and over again, directed at the losing Team eLevate. Some in the community find this behaviour intolerable while others seem quick to shrug it off; we think it's deplorable.

Elsewhere, streamers are hyped for *Infinite Warfare* after a hard day of play, recording videos in the lobby – though a group of assembling eGirls outside are proving »

INSPIRATION BEHIND ZOMBIES IN SPACELAND

How Neversoft is bringing its expertise to the table

While the campaign for *Call Of Duty: Infinite Warfare* will edge toward seriousness and the multiplayer is a focused test of your ability, Infinity Ward's take on Zombies co-op is going to be purely chaotic. In fact, you've never seen anything like this from *Call Of Duty* before – it's insane, totally tongue-in-cheek and it features David Hasselhoff. Trust us, you've never seen or played anything quite like *Infinite Warfare*'s accompanying co-op mode, Zombies In Spaceland.

So how was it created? How do the Infinity Ward developers – led by project director Brian Bright – actually sit down to brainstorm something so ridiculous? Well, it takes "three tabs of acid and a bunch of beer," the veteran ex- Neversoft developer laughs. "No, no it was only a little bit of that. We're lucky to have the flexibility to be as creative as we want to be."

Zombies In Spaceland demonstrates Infinity Ward's affinity for having fun. It's totally separate from anything that has appeared in the Zombies modes before, but it's proving to be just as entertaining, a welcomed break from everything else in the package. "We set out to make something totally separate. We aren't making anything in the Treyarch universe – they have crafted that over the last eight years and we know how important it is for gamers to want a break from MP and break from SP," says Bright. "They really want something different, not the same assets in a different setting. In the last game [*Ghosts*] my team did Extinction, but the people want zombies."

And so they have delivered. This is the Zombies that you know, but with some critical upgrades. It's designed to play with the "hedonistic and fun era" and really double down on the idea of this being set in a theme park. Despite the horde of zombies to kill, there are mini-games to be played – "tickets will get you weapons from the future" – and even rides to be enjoyed. If that doesn't take your fancy, then perhaps you'll just be in it for the soundtrack – though believe us when we say that you've never played anything quite like this in *Call Of Duty* before.

"I was born in the Seventies but I grew up in the Eighties. I used to DJ in clubs in the Eighties, so I have a big affinity with the music," teases Bright. "We've got a great soundtrack... I mean, we've put together the soundtracks to the *Tony Hawk* and *Guitar Hero* games over the last 20 years and working on this one has been a lot of fun. Hasselhoff is the DJ –he's trying to help you escape from the park – and he will play music across it; It's almost that *Tony Hawk* vibe of just playing through and having a killer soundtrack and having some fun with it."

INFINITE WARFARE'S CAMPAIGN

Did it deserve the hate?

Jacob Minkoff has just broken our hearts. The design director on *Call Of Duty: Infinite Warfare*, has just revealed some devastating news: Riley the dog has not survived the purge following 2013's *Call Of Duty: Ghosts*. "We discussed lots and lots of things for *Infinite Warfare*... but Riley is unfortunately not in this game. There is no cosmonaut space dog."

We considered stopping the interview right there and then, but, honestly, Infinity Ward is doing so much right with the campaign of its upcoming shooter that it's difficult to walk away. *Infinite Warfare* isn't your traditional *Call Of Duty* game – it's taking the combat from the streets to the stars in an impressive fashion. It isn't just flirting with science-fiction, it's jumping into bed with it. *Infinite Warfare* wasn't received fantastically at reveal by certain corners of the community – not that it's keeping the team down.

"Everyone wants new and different but then everyone wants the same. That's true of anything that anybody likes," says Minkoff. "I think we've done a really good job of integrating [the new features] into the game. It will feel like *Call Of Duty* that you know and recognise, but then it'll kick back to you and you'll realise you've been leading the whole time."

Wait, leading? That's right; in *Infinite Warfare* you're the captain. You're in charge of saving the world. Instead of merely following orders, you'll be able to dish them out. You'll be able to take charge of a huge battleship in space, dart between your fully customisable Jackal jet and eventually get back onto the streets for some old-school soldier shooting.

"You are generally the FNG, the new guy; that's really cool, but now we have the opportunity to this really unique thing," says Minkoff. "This story is all about the burden and weight of leadership – of having thousands of soldiers under your command," he explains. "Because you're the leader in the moment-to-moment, you're the one pushing forward and leading the NPCs in the actual missions. We put a lot of new mechanics in the game to support this."

The series had to evolve. It had to change and grow, and the game is looking all the better because of it. "We know we needed to evolve, the fans want different things and a lot of us came in as fans. So then it became, what do *we* want out of *Call Of Duty*?" The answer is *Infinite Warfare*, and you'll be able to decide for yourself whether it's what you wanted when it arrives in November.





■ Pro players were brought into Infinity Ward early in the development of *Infinite Warfare* to consult on balancing, rule-sets and map creation; Activision continues to put real weight and importance behind eSports.



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be a distraction for some. Oh, the eGirls – their term, not ours – are gaming streamers' versions of superfans who are seemingly desperate to talk to or grab selfies with any streamer they can – be they superstars like Ali-A or the likes of TmarTn. But we only had one thing on our mind: getting to play *Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare Remastered*.

VETERANS WANTED

"There's a lot of excitement at Raven," states studio director David Pellas with a beaming smile, and we get the impression that's something of an understatement. Raven Software has spent the better part of five years in the shadows. It has contributed to every *Call Of Duty* release since *Modern Warfare 3*, though this is the studio's first opportunity to lead a project. And what a fine job it is doing.

In the last nine years, *COD* has evolved. Moving between *Infinite Warfare* and *Modern Warfare* is like stepping into a time machine. *Infinite Warfare* is complicated and fun all at the same time, but *Modern Warfare Remastered* is a simplified riot.

"When we [took on the project] and created our general rules and our guidelines, the number one design rule was to maintain the integrity of the gameplay," continues Pellas. "We realised quickly that you can't mess with the gameplay, [but] we wanted to make sure that we were making a game that fits into today's world – not a ten-year-old game that we were just going to up the resolution of. Nobody wants that. The fans wouldn't appreciate that."

It's difficult to believe that this was the game that changed the first-person shooter for an entire generation; *Modern Warfare Remastered* is a slow, simplistic shooter by today's standards. "This isn't a game where you can wall run or you can double jump," Pellas reminds us. "It's a game based in reality." And that's true, to a certain extent; it does seem more realistic when there aren't any black hole projectors or robotic dogs killing you from around corners indiscriminately.

Raven has been careful to bring updates to the game, across both its single-player and multiplayer components. "There have been thousands of these little instances that we had to really critique," reveals Pellas, noting how hard the studio has worked to faithfully re-create the game whilst still bringing it into the modern era. "We didn't change any gameplay, but we changed the visuals of it," he says, noting that while the animations may have changed for mantling over cover or pulling a weapon into ADS, "the timing is exactly the same," – ultimately that's all that matters.

Truth be told, it's quite an impressive conversion. It's a return to a world where muscle memory is far more important than any laser-quick reactions or ability to masterfully wield a jump pack. If you can remember the identifying sound of a Martyrdom Perk activating, to jump into prone at the first sight of a Flashbang, and how to properly assault Grandma's House – then you'll blossom and thrive just like before.

It was interesting to see, actually, the difference in skill levels between players here at COD XP. For the most part, the guys that were taking people to school on *Infinite Warfare* were the ones struggling once when we dipped nine years into the past. Map knowledge is key to victory, as too is managing the small selection of weapon choices and tactical equipment. Positioning is oh-so-important to *Modern Warfare*, and we expect to see quite the divide between players come November.

WE DO NOT BELONG

There's quite a change in atmosphere by the time the final day of COD XP arrives. While the other days had a tendency to be quite relaxed, now the crowd is locked down in their seats. One fan is proudly holding a banner above his head that reads: "#CollegeOrCODXP – My mum doesn't know I'm here, please don't film me." This final day is chaos.

Splyce has done the impossible, rising up from the Loser Bracket – dishing out convincing wins against FAB Games and eLevate – to reach the grand final versus Team EnVyUs. The North American fans are not happy; Europe's ability to dent the competitive scene is seen as a bit of a joke and Splyce making it this far has caused a bit of commotion – it has never been done before in the history of competitive *Call Of Duty*.

> "The number one design rule was to maintain the integrity of the gameplay"
>
> - DAVID PELLAS, RAVEN SOFTWARE

Killstreaks are met with screams, game-winning plays with standing ovations. Whenever the Tempest Payload weapon was deployed, people would go freaking *wild*. Every move matters here, even the tiniest mistake could be worth over $600,000 to the four. The positioning is fast and reactionary – it's a different level of play and it's thrilling to watch.

In spite of a valiant effort, Splyce are beaten to the grand prize by EnVyUs, the applause is exhaustive. If you've never understood the appeal of eSports or professional gaming, you should get down to a major event – whether it's sponsored by Gfinity or ESL – and see what it's like for yourself. In a moment, in *that* moment, it all makes sense.

"Winning this event, in front of this crowd is a dream come true," said Jordan 'JKAP' Kaplan, the captain of victorious Team EnVyUs. "The energy, the tension, and the competition were all amazing. This is a moment that I will remember for the rest of my life." We think it might just be one we remember too.



■ *Infinite Warfare* will introduce weapon crafting for the first time. This will allow players the opportunity to focus wholeheartedly on obtaining a single weapon of choice, but you'll also be able to get powerful Prototype weapons that come in various rarities.

THE FUTURE IS FINALLY HERE!

PS





VR

LAUNCH REVIEW SPECIAL

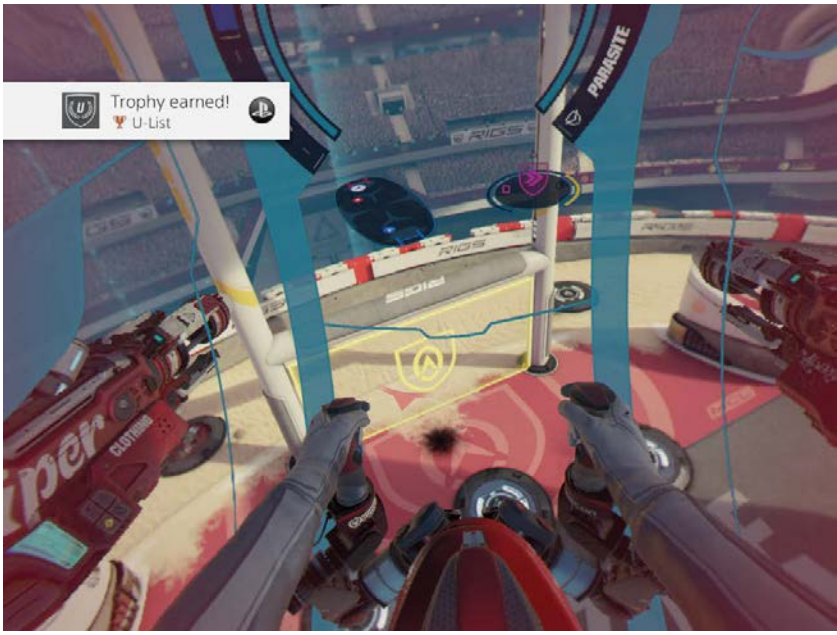
The likes of Oculus Rift and HTC Vive have created quite the buzz around this new wave of consumer VR and at last, Sony's solution is ready to join them. While less powerful on paper than its high-end PC competitors, PlayStation VR works, we're happy to report, entirely as intended. Head tracking is superb, frame rates have been on lock in everything we've played and while some experiences work better than others, the highlights – things like *Rez Infinite* and *RIGS*, as you'll discover in the coming pages – are guaranteed to blow you away. Given that the headset isn't exactly cheap (don't forget you'll need the PlayStation Camera too, plus a pair of Move controllers if you want to use full motion control), we decided to round up as many of the launch games as possible, pit them all against one another and see which came out on top. The hardware itself is excellent – light, comfortable, slick and suitably futuristic – but when it comes to games, you're going to want to know which make the best use of your expensive new toy...



MECHA ACTIVATED

RIGS: Mechanized Combat League

PUBLISHER: Sony | **DEVELOPER:** Guerrilla Cambridge | **ORIGIN:** UK
PRICE: £49.99 | **PLAYERS:** 1-6 | **ONLINE REVIEWED:** Yes | **MOVE SUPPORT:** No



Right: Chief enjoys the sound of his voice far too much, although the slow tutorial is important in easing you into the virtual chaos – without it, the experience would almost certainly be overwhelming and potentially even nauseating for some.



PS VR

Developers have been theorising on the future of sports for decades, but almost every effort falls into the same trap. Simple abstractions of existing sports usually end up more convoluted and less engaging than games based on the actual sport, while deviating too much from the traditional often creates issues with accessibility. Those few games that have succeeded in this field have typically had one thing in common – simplicity. Just like the compelling carball of *Rocket League*, all of *RIGS*' three-on-three game modes are easy to understand and great fun to play, although the complexities of piloting a mech and physically dealing with the sensation of darting around arenas at high speed might not come quite so easily to some players.

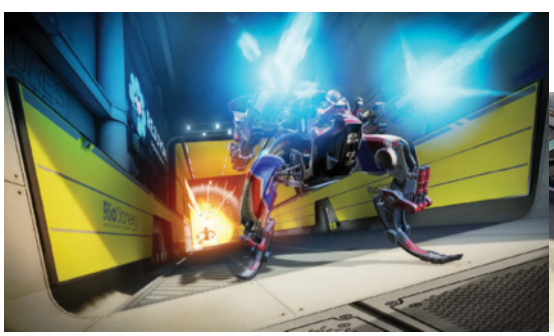
Of all the PSVR titles currently available, *RIGS* is by far the most intense. An in-game splash screen even warns as much, suggesting easing yourself in with shorter sessions before working up to longer stints, which works really well – after the daunting first few matches, we were soon able to stomach more court time per sitting. Protracted tutorials, intermissions, results screens and menus actually help in this regard and while their unskippable nature makes them feel frustrating at first, the purpose they serve in offering a needed respite from the game's breakneck pace is likely essential for player comfort. Numerous settings allow you to improve this further, altering control methods, field of view and disabling eject sequence visuals if needed in order to optimise the experience – *RIGS* has the most plentiful suite of comfort options of any PS VR title to date, and it's all the better for it.

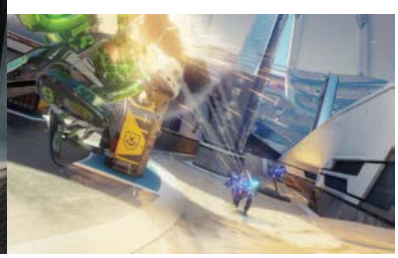
> You'll need to get your VR legs before you can play for extended periods

Above: Unlocking new mechs is a fairly slow process, although you're able to test and use basic versions of each archetype before you invest in the real deal... or if you end up splashing out on a mech you end up hating.

That's just as well too, since despite the simplicity of its concept, the actual act of piloting your mech is one of the most intense and hectic VR experiences we've encountered thus far. While fishing for takedowns and chasing balls, you need to keep one eye on your radar and another on your mech's power mode, cycling between movement, combat and healing boosts as the situation demands – it's a lot to juggle and it can be overwhelming to begin with, especially if you're also trying to adapt to the unique abilities and weapons of a new mech. Once you fall into the right rhythm and settle on a ride you like (or several, ideally – each fills a different role depending on team composition and mode being played), it's enormously satisfying and having mastered the basics against AI opponents, you'll be ready to take the fight online, which is where competition really hots up. You can either go 1v1 with two AI allies each or delve into the chaos of a full three-on-three match, although the latter demands a lot more communication and coordination, not unlike high-level *Rocket League* play.

Both captivating and original, *RIGS* is a clear standout title in PSVR's launch line-up, not to mention one of the few games available right now that actually feels like a full-featured product rather than a glorified tech demo. The intensity means you'll need to get your VR legs before you can play for extended periods of time but once you're over that hump, expect to spend more time in the arena than in any other launch game or experience.





VERDICT

PLAYSTATION VR'S CURRENT MVP

8

PlayMag_UK scored **8** for RIGS

Follow our scores on JUSTASCORE



Above: It's becoming clear that multiplayer gaming is what's going to keep virtual reality alive until 2017, an area Rebellion has dipped its toes into. *Battlezone* supports four-player co-op, a fun way to waste your time, so long as you have friends with the appropriate equipment to join you, of course.

RETRO REVIVAL IN A FUTURISTIC WORLD

Battlezone

PUBLISHER: Rebellion | **DEVELOPER:** In-house | **ORIGIN:** UK
PRICE: £49.99 | **PLAYERS:** 1-4 | **ONLINE REVIEWED:** Yes | **MOVE SUPPORT:** No

PS VR

If there is ever an appropriate time to have an existential crisis, we can guarantee it *isn't* as you're clambering into the cockpit of a giant battle tank, as enemy vehicles approach from all sides. But perhaps it speaks to the killer job Rebellion has done here, showcasing how easy it is to build and break immersion.

The scale of the tanks is wildly impressive; the cockpit for each so lovingly deigned and detailed that you'll want to reach and touch everything, though you can't, of course – don't expect *Steel Battalion* levels of control over these hulking machines. Then, as you approach conflict – cycling through your various weapon systems – you'll see cannons and energy blasters lock into place outside of the cockpit, crowding your peripheral vision, and you'll feel powerful. Powerful but ineffectual, bemused even, because your pilot doesn't have a body – it's a distracting omission that never stops being strange.

Which is a shame, because *Battlezone* is a pretty solid attempt to bring the arcade game out of the past and into VR. The beautifully evocative low-poly, flat colour graphical spread proves to be a loving update of the vector wireframe from days gone by, while the tank-to-tank action is simple but intuitive. Enemy AI is basic but that's often offset by the stress of having to manage ammunition pools, your shields (which can be exchanged for a short boost) and shifting objectives across each of the short procedurally generated campaign missions. *Battlezone* is basic and will quickly feel routine, but it's also fun— not to mention an interesting window into the possibilities and pitfalls of virtual reality.

VERDICT

INTERESTING IDEA, THROWAWAY FUN

6 PlayMag_UK scored **6** for Battlezone

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD

Driveclub VR

PUBLISHER: Sony | **DEVELOPER:** Evolution Studios | **ORIGIN:** UK
PRICE: £29.99 | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **ONLINE REVIEWED:** Yes | **MOVE SUPPORT:** No

PS VR

Coming off the back of the beautiful visuals and crisp, clean image quality of the original game, the sacrifices that have had to be made to get *Driveclub VR* running at triple the frame rate are both glaring and jarring. It's all well and good being able to look around at will but when all you're likely to see is rough aliasing on scenery and fuzzy textures in your peripheral vision, the need and desire to do so simply isn't there. New urban environments box in the action a little more and fare better as a result, but those that have been carried across from the core game just feel a bit rough around the edges... which isn't very *Driveclub*.

It's a shame because the core gameplay is as tight as ever and the actual sensation of blazing around courses in high-end sports cars is generally great. Usability options allow you to alter ride height and closeness to the wheel on a vehicle-by-vehicle basis to ensure maximum comfort and while the sense of immersion can be enhanced further still by using a wheel peripheral, that's only going to be an option for a particular niche of a niche who have (or would buy) two expensive peripherals for a single game.

Content is plentiful and the level of detail in the vehicles remains impressive, as you'll notice when you check out your ride before each race. It's just a shame that most environments don't feel like they're up to the same standard – that of both cars and experience – although that could say more about the difficulty of adapting existing games and assets for VR rather than creating content with the headset in mind.

VERDICT

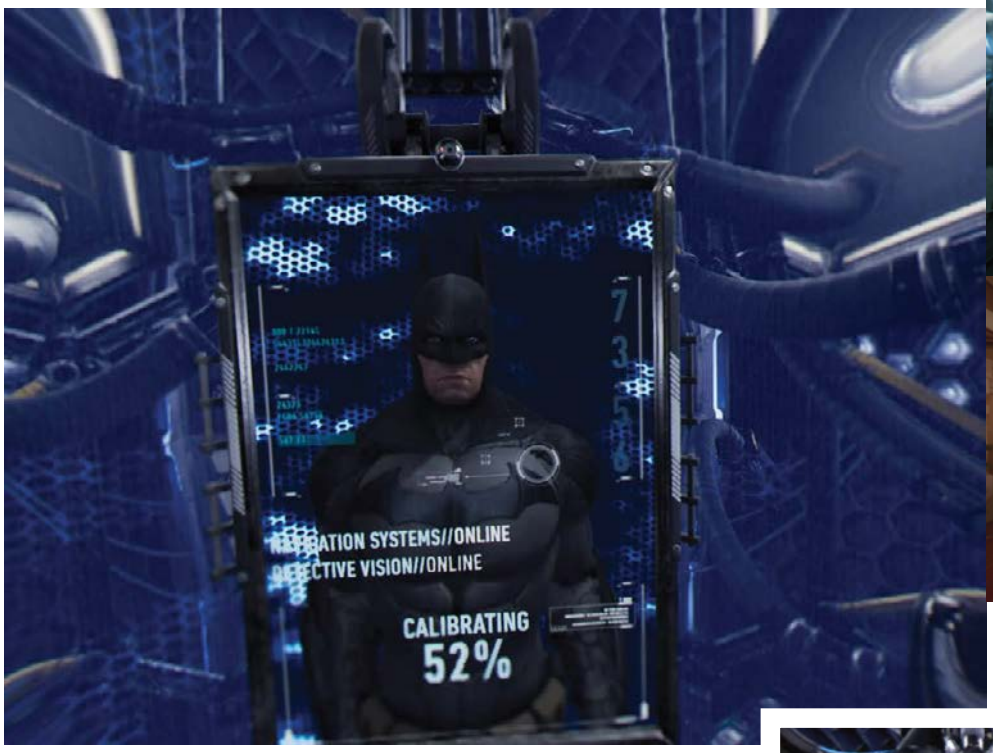
ROUGH VISUALS DAMPEN ITS IMPACT

7 PlayMag_UK scored **7** for Driveclub VR

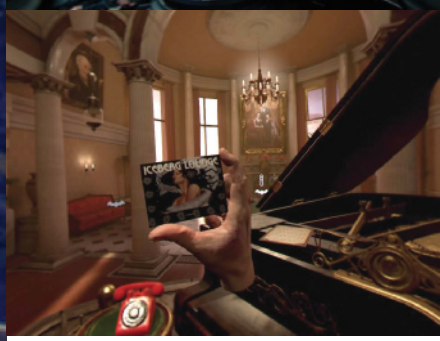
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Above: Vehicle interiors are suitably detailed, but everything further away is significantly less so – look off into the distance and you almost start to worry about cutting yourself on all those jagged edges.







Above: While it can be completed in 90 minutes, there's a ton of content hidden beneath the surface. Every area is packed with secrets, Easter eggs and mysterious Riddler trophies. Though you could spend a solid hour marvelling at the Batcave and its contents alone.

WIDE-EYED AND WEARY

Batman: Arkham VR

PUBLISHER: Warner Bros. | **DEVELOPER:** Rocksteady | **ORIGIN:** UK
PRICE: £15.99 | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **ONLINE REVIEWED:** N/A | **MOVE SUPPORT:** Yes

PS VR

***Batman: Arkham VR* truly represents the very best and worst virtual reality has to offer – its promise and potential, the restrictions and subsequent resentment that soon follows.** But as Rocksteady's masterful creation so readily demonstrates, VR *can* act as a gateway to another world; confidently blurring our understanding of what is real and what isn't. It gifts us the opportunity to be swallowed into a life so far removed from our own that the only applicable response is to just stand there... paralysed; trapped in a state of silent of awe and appreciation.

The limitations are, however, as clearly defined as the strengths themselves. For virtual reality to be truly transcendent, it seems, gameplay must becomes defiantly rudimentary, confined to claustrophobic spaces in aid of evoking emotional resonance without making players ill.

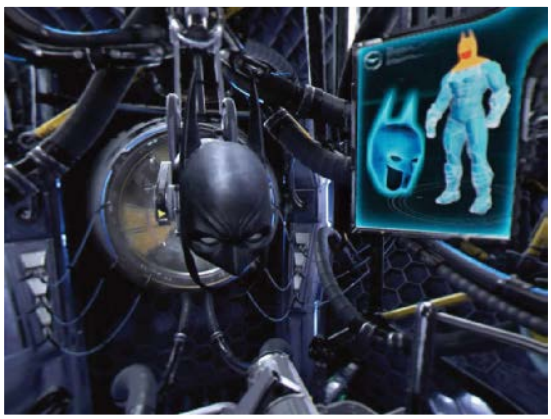
This can manifest itself in a number of ways interesting ways, but it's when the appropriate tools are handed to the right team, one with a clear and critical understanding of what makes a fictional world – and its inhabitants, its essence – work, that the results become truly astounding. As such, *Batman: Arkham VR* is a masterclass in navigating limitations.

It achieves unparalleled immersion in a virtual space, bringing the grit and grime of Gotham City to life in a way that no artist, writer or animator has ever been able to achieve. The problem that *Batman: Arkham VR* clashes with so often across its short running time, however, is that the limited interaction you have with the world seems incongruous with the immense immersion it is actively establishing.

It's undoubtedly shallow; an uncomfortable flashback to an era where motion-controlled gameplay was on the periphery of true innovation in the industry – using simple wrist movements to perform simple interactions, it isn't that unlike those first experiences you may have had with the Nintendo Wii all those years ago. But then the Wii never teleported you into a crime-solving expedition through Gotham, nor, truth be told, did its controller enjoy the same precision of movement as PlayStation's Move sticks do.

> Batman: Arkham VR is a masterclass in navigating limitations

And it certainly - as no console or device has ever truly done in the past - ever afforded you the opportunity to drape the iconic black cowl over your shoulders. It's as *Batman: Arkham VR* lets you glance into a mirror for the first time, Bruce Wayne's head moving in tandem with your own, that PSVR makes sense. For a moment you will truly believe that you are Gotham's Dark Knight; all you'll be able to do is smile, smile as Batman's scowl stares straight back at you.



Above: You should be prepared for this to readily challenge your perception of what may or may not constitute a 'videogame'. *Arkham VR* treads a fine line between cinematic experience and interactive curiosity. Look, it's going to be one of *those* years. Welcome to VR...

You have agency in this perfectly paced story, but it feels almost fraudulent—fleeting. For the lifelong Batman fan, gazing across the Gotham skyline – feeling the weight of its stillborn depression hanging over you – will be enough: enough to justify the price, enough to fall in love with virtual reality. *Batman: Arkham VR* represents the best and worst of VR, then, but then when was the last time you cried playing make-believe in a videogame? Exactly.

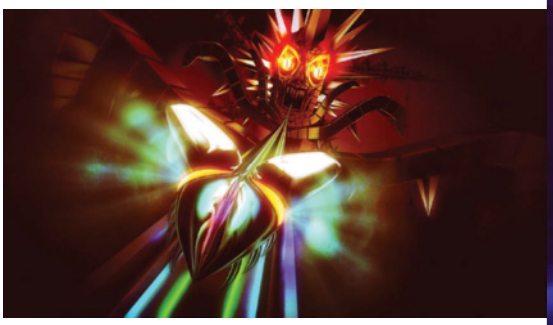
VERDICT

A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE FOR ANY BATMAN FAN

8

PlayMag_UK scored **8** for Batman: Arkham VR

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE





INTRODUCING 'RHYTHM VIOLENCE'

Thumper

PUBLISHER: Drool | **DEVELOPER:** In-house | **ORIGIN:** US
PRICE: £15.99 | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **ONLINE REVIEWED:** N/A | **MOVE SUPPORT:** No

PS VR

Most rhythm-action games look to ease players in and ensure accessibility by offering easier charts and no-fail modes for those not ready to face Hard or Expert-tier difficulty levels. *Thumper* is not most rhythm-action games. It's relentless, ruthless and uncompromising, its blistering pace, myriad hazards and undulating courses all deviously devised to punish anything less than perfect play. And as frustrating as that can be when the challenge ramps up as quickly as it does, the whole experience is just so intense and unique that you'll recover from every audiovisual kick in the face with a masochistic desire for more.

Considering it only uses one button and directional control, *Thumper* offers a surprising amount of depth and variety as you attempt to match its increasingly complex patterns. You start by simply cornering and hitting floor panels but before long, you're soaring over obstacles, slamming beats for bonuses and rapidly switching lanes, most of which are tricks you can employ when returning to levels earlier than they were introduced to help achieve higher scores. There are also plenty of optional hazards for those looking to push their luck, test their skill and smash the leaderboards, although the safer option is usually the preferable one on a first run.

Brutal in both difficulty and presentation and even more oppressive than usual when you're immersed in this surreal hellish world in VR, *Thumper* truly feels like the kind of game you 'beat' rather than 'finish', a trial to be overcome against all odds. It revels in complex timings and tricky off-beat hits in later stages, more abstract and misleading beats sometimes pushing it closer to memory test than rhythmic challenge, which can be frustrating as passages get pretty long later on. But when it all comes together and you're bashing, slamming and screeching out call-and-response beats, *Thumper* is absorbing, rewarding and utterly unique.

Above: *Thumper*'s simple visuals mean it never struggles to maintain fluidity. In fact, a PS4 Pro update down the line will add native 4K support for 2D play without sacrificing that steady frame-rate.

VERDICT

A GLORIOUS ASSAULT ON THE SENSES

8 PlayMag_UK scored **8** for Thumper
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE





Above: While *EVE: Valkyrie* provides a lot of fun, the actual ship-to-ship combat can get a little tiresome eventually. The thrill of weaving through space, dodging debris and navigating impossible spaces at high speed, can only thrill for so long.

A DEFINING MOMENT SPLASHED ACROSS THE STARS

EVE: Valkyrie

PUBLISHER: CCP | **DEVELOPER:** CCP Newcastle | **ORIGIN:** UK
PRICE: £49.99 | **PLAYERS:** 1-16 | **ONLINE REVIEWED:** Yes | **MOVE SUPPORT:** No

PS VR

When you slip away, into the deepest of slumbers, where do you go? Are you bound by reality as we know it or do take to the stars? Does your dreamscape contort into the shape of a Colonial Viper cockpit (Mark II, naturally), or perhaps to one of the gunnery positions on the Millennium Falcon, with John Williams' iconSic score hitting a near-constant crescendo as you soar through battles?

If it does, you'll love *EVE: Valkyrie*. You'll love it enough to overlook its flaws – the relatively shallow gameplay and lack of objective drive to play – because it's what every young space-faring pilot has ever dreamed of: the opportunity to weave through meteors, the chance to cut through colourful vapour lines and engage in frantic battles, shooting everything and anything that moves.

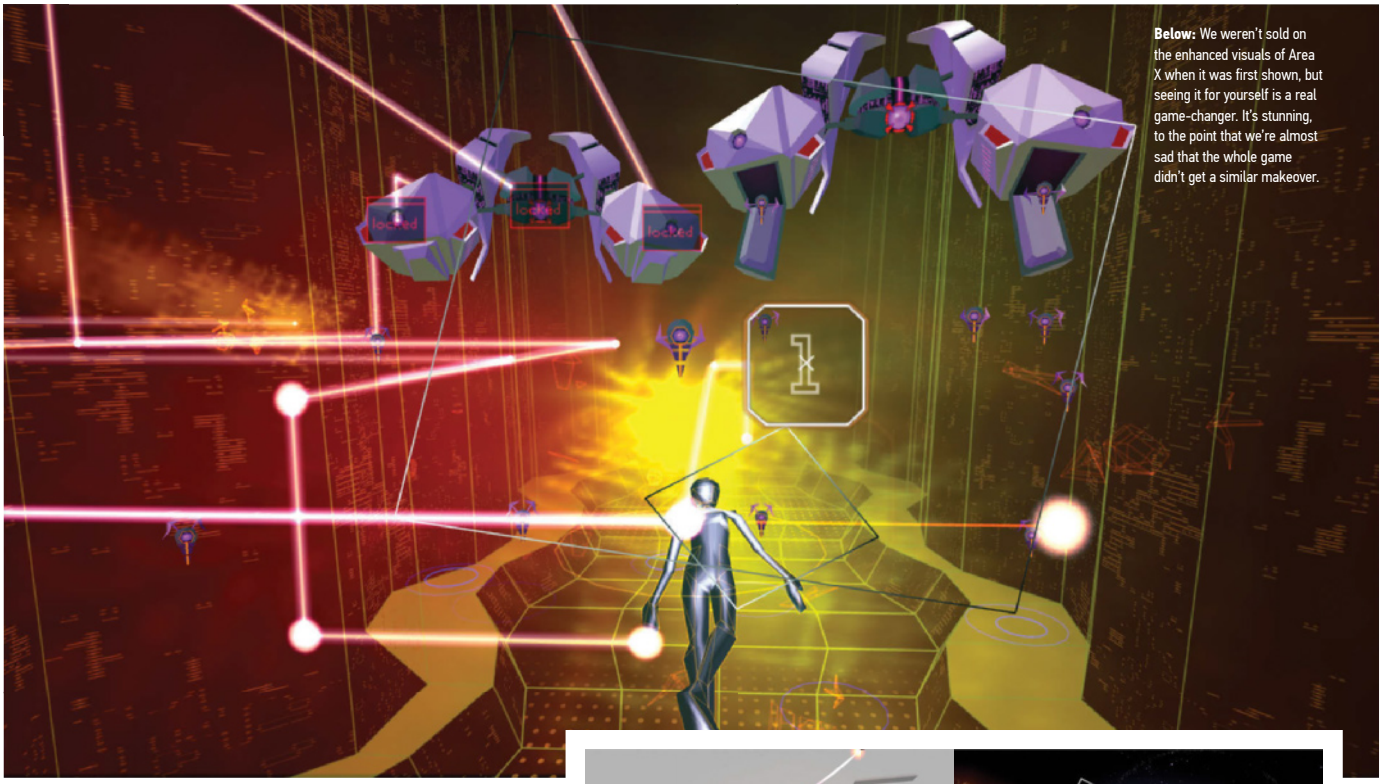
EVE: Valkyrie is one of the most spectacular and content-complete games available on PlayStation VR, proving (just as it did for the launch of Oculus Rift) that the new technology can both support full game releases packed with stuff to see and do and sustain lengthy play sessions without pulling you into the throes of motion sickness.

The moment you are launched out from the bowels of a space station – gazing out across the planets, stars and enemy fighters – is still one a defining moments of VR, as too is utilising CCP Newcastle's innovative head-tracking look-to-lock missile system. That said, it's still difficult to ignore how hollow the dog-fighting eventually becomes. Still, if you have a crew to engage in multiplayer with – across both PSVR and Oculus, thanks to cross-platform support - *EVE: Valkyrie* should sustain until the next wave of games lands.

VERDICT

SPECTACULAR BUT STRUGGLES TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM

7 PlayMag_UK scored **7** for EVE: Valkyrie
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



Below: We weren't sold on the enhanced visuals of Area X when it was first shown, but seeing it for yourself is a real game-changer. It's stunning, to the point that we're almost sad that the whole game didn't get a similar makeover.

VR IS THE MIND KILLER

Rez Infinite

PUBLISHER: Enhance Games | **DEVELOPER:** In-house | **ORIGIN:** Japan
PRICE: £19.99 | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **ONLINE REVIEWED:** N/A | **MOVE SUPPORT:** Yes





PS VR

It feels like something of a bad omen – or at least some kind of cruel joke – to see a new piece of technology launch with an updated game that first released on the ill-fated Dreamcast in a starring role. But the dark clouds part the moment you hit the touchpad button to activate VR Mode and become one with *Rez*. This has always been a game best enjoyed bright, loud and isolated, optimal conditions that are easier than ever to achieve when you're strapped into a VR headset. And yes, it's every bit as glorious as its was before, if not more so.

Below: Contrary to some reports prior to launch, the whole of *Rez Infinite* – including Area X – is playable without a VR headset. As a pure score attack game, that's perhaps still the best way to play.

> Area X feels like what Rez would be like if it launched today



For the main game – presented here in fully remastered form with all the old unlockables and options intact behind the enhanced presentation – VR comes in two flavours, a more sedate option where aiming is still primarily done with the controller and a more intense mode with full head tracking for aiming. The latter is something of a double-edged sword, the closer viewpoint requiring much more looking around in order to catch all enemies, projectiles and pickups in time but the quicker aiming making clearing up larger groups much smoother and simpler than before. While this increased immersion is undeniably amazing, there are points where game design simply hasn't been updated to fully accommodate the new freedom of vision – the camera sometimes snaps awkwardly to a different direction which can be jarring, while brief cutscenes like those common in Area 5 and the final encounter with Eden tend to come with camera cuts that can be uncomfortable. Similarly, the transitions between areas – particularly the more vigorous ones – and some of the quicker movements like in the Area 4 boss battle could trigger motion sickness in affected players. All the same, diving headfirst into the supercomputer is stunning despite these minor faults, and that only improves when you launch into the spectacular and all-new Area X.

Created specifically for *Infinite*, Area X feels like what *Rez* would be like if it launched today. Overhauled visuals are far more complex and particle effects are *everywhere*, with players even granted control over movement speed and direction in order to soar around beautiful new arenas. As with the core game, the sense of escalation is incredible, more complex enemy types and audio stings layering on intensity from all sides as you soar towards your destination. Area X is the clear centrepiece of the VR *Rez* experience, a mode evidently constructed with VR in mind rather than updated to simply support it and right now, there's a solid argument to be made for this being the quintessential PSVR experience.

If we were to pick a classic game to launch alongside Sony's VR gambit, we don't think we'd be able to settle on a better fit than *Rez*. Well done, everyone.

VERDICT

THE ULTIMATE WAY TO EXPERIENCE SYNAESTHESIA

9

PlayMag_UK scored **9** for Rez Infinite

Follow our scores on JUSTASCORE

FUN TO VISIT, BUT YOU WON'T WANT TO STAY

PlayStation VR Worlds

PUBLISHER: Sony | **DEVELOPER:** London Studio | **ORIGIN:** UK
PRICE: £29.99 | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **ONLINE REVIEWED:** N/A | **MOVE SUPPORT:** Yes

PS VR

Given that every headset already comes with a demo disc that offers a selection of different experiences to try, *VR Worlds* finds itself in a curious position. A disparate set of tech demos of varying quality, it's a novelty selection box that would work really well as a permanent fixture in a PSVR demo unit (were it not for the fact that The London Heist has quite the mouth on it, at least) but that falls incredibly flat as a commercial product.

The main reason for this is a complete lack of longevity in all five titles. *Ocean Descent* is the worst offender in this regard, a barely-interactive diving experience that runs for ten minutes or so and while cool the first time, you'll never want or need to run it more than once, especially since the two unlockable dives are just dull truncated versions of the main one. There's a little more substance to *VR Luge*, but it's just not very much fun – a lack of collision with vehicles removes all sense of risk and cripples the experience's impact and thrill, plus the sense of speed is never that great to begin with and it's uncomfortable to play.

Things do pick up elsewhere, it must be said, and although we've seen most of it before at various preview events, *The London Heist* is the pick of the bunch. It's short, sure, but it's a great showcase for a level of detail and interactivity that should come as standard in VR-centric games. Played with Move (the preferable control system), you can fiddle with trinkets while the Cockney mobsters reel off their so-bad-it's-good cliché dialogue, or mess with radios and air-cons while chugging a soda and gunning down bikers – it's the playful freedom of something like *Job Simulator* presented as a secondary feature rather than the focus of a game and in something as knowingly daft as this, it works brilliantly. Some of the minor details really make us excited for future titles that heed its advice, too – NPCs comment on and react to all kinds of gestures and head movements, plus there are a good amount of subtle interactions with the world itself.

Scavengers Odyssey, meanwhile, feels like a missed opportunity, its brain-bending, stomach-turning gravity-defying leaps a sensation worlds apart from its tedious combat. Given the nature of the game and how it sees you leaping through space and hurtling around at a fair pace, it's best played after the others, once your eyes and brain are more acclimatised to the VR experience – like *RIGS*, it's an intense ride and so probably not the best place to start your VR adventure. *Danger Ball*, despite its name, fits that role far better, a simple 3D version of *Pong* where the paddle is moved simply by looking around.



Above: *The London Heist* feels more fleshed-out than the likes of *VR Luge*, both in terms of content and the level of interaction possible. You'll need a pair of Move controllers to get the most out of the experience...

> VR Worlds is a fair showcase for the new hardware

If you're likely to be showing off your new headset to a bunch of different people, *VR Worlds* is a fair showcase for the new hardware, if one where only *The London Heist* stands out over anything on the stock demo disc. If only one or two people are likely to experience it, though, it's simply not worth the outlay.

VERDICT

A TASTER PLATTER THAT WILL LEAVE YOU HUNGRY

5

PlayMag_UK scored **5** for PlayStation VR Worlds

Follow our scores on JUSTA SCORE



Inset: Presentation is superb throughout, playing into the fact that this serves as a showcase for VR well. In fact, that's pretty much all it does.



Above: Obstacles must be avoided by leaning or ducking, sometimes while hurtling along at speed. Fortunately, this concept is introduced early and isn't exactly the toughest thing to pick up...

DARE YOU RIDE THE GHOST TRAIN?

Until Dawn: Rush Of Blood

PUBLISHER: Sony | **DEVELOPER:** Supermassive Games | **ORIGIN:** UK
PRICE: £15.99 | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **ONLINE REVIEWED:** N/A | **MOVE SUPPORT:** Yes

PS VR

While we're not entirely sure slapping the *Until Dawn* name on this tongue-in-cheek on-rails (literally) shooter, it might have something to do with the PS4 horror surprise's past. Supermassive Games was originally working with Move as a primary input device for *Until Dawn* when the game was first announced for PS3, later shifting to traditional controller when it was moved onto the current gen console instead. That experience is telling here, with individual gun aiming possible with twin Move wands to an extent far greater (and thus far more useful) than is possible on a controller, which basically binds both guns/arms together to track and follow the pad in 3D space.

Each of the seven differently themed levels taps into a different fear, taking in clowns, ghosts, pigs, mannequins and spiders for a few easy frights (if not quite as easy as its many jump scares) and they're mostly good fun on your first play or two. Even with the odd branching route, though, all impact is lost once you know what's coming up, leaving the game to fall back on a passable scoring system to provide longevity. Trouble is, that kind of play doesn't exactly gel with the incredibly slow pace that its horror roots demand and even though there are multiple difficulty levels, leaderboards, collectibles and secrets to grab, *Rush Of Blood* just isn't a game you can play for long before you start seeing the cables and pulleys that make the ghost train run.

A playful fusion of rollercoaster, light gun game and soft horror game that plays off cheap frights and fears, *Rush Of Blood* is an amusing enough ride but most likely one that you won't want to get on more than a couple of times.

VERDICT
DAFT, SHORT-LIVED FUN

6 PlayMag_UK scored **6** for Until Dawn: Rush Of Blood
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

MULTIPLAYER SHENANIGANS GALORE

The Playroom VR

PUBLISHER: Sony | **DEVELOPER:** In-house | **ORIGIN:** Japan
PRICE: Free | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **ONLINE REVIEWED:** No | **MOVE SUPPORT:** No

PS VR

Just as *The Playroom* served as a decent demonstration of what the DualShock 4 and PlayStation Camera could do in tandem, this VR update – once again populated by those adorable little robots – is a showcase for what can be done when you throw a VR headset into that mix as well. While the original was a solo experience, the VR version is instead primarily multiplayer, offering a selection of rebuttals to the idea that putting on a headset immediately shuts off social play. A quaint little *Crash*-esque platformer and capsule toy diorama are the only parts that can be played alone, in fact, but it's for the best – the other demos out there show off solo experiences, so it's great to see some more inventive group experiences.

Interestingly, this is one of the few games available that displays something different on the shared screen to what the headset user sees, which is used on a gameplay level (*Wanted!* sees TV players describing villains from the screen which the headset player has to identify and shoot, for instance) as well as reinforcing dialogue between players – different perspectives mean there are surprises to be found in the VR world that you might not discover without help from the TV team. Aside from this, only *Keep Talking And Nobody Explodes* really experiments with local multiplayer VR on PS4 right now, meaning this beautifully presented and charming showcase should be an automatic download once you have a headset. Considering it's free, the potential and production values are both absolutely superb and it makes us eager to see what developers will cook up next when it comes to social VR.

VERDICT
PROOF THAT VR NEEDN'T BE A SOLITARY EXPERIENCE

8 PlayMag_UK scored **8** for The Playroom VR
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



Above: After playing so many isolated experiences, the collective fun of *The Playroom VR* served as a wonderful reminder that there could be a more social side to virtual reality gaming.

HERE THEY LIE



PUBLISHER: Sony | **DEVELOPER:** Tangentlemen
PRICE: £15.99 | **MOVE SUPPORT:** Yes

Part *Silent Hill,* part *The Last Of Us* and all deeply, wonderfully horrible, *Here They Lie* is the launch title of choice for those who wanted to be scared stupid – the *Blair Witch* to *Until Dawn*'s *Scream*, if you will. Movement is fairly sluggish, which actually helps with the tension – the 45-degree right stick jerk turns of the default control method are nasty, but turning via head tracking (or the right stick with an alternate mode) works okay. Stylish, bleak and terrifying.

8

SUPER STARDUST ULTRA VR



PUBLISHER: Sony | **DEVELOPER:** D3T
PRICE: £7.99 | **MOVE SUPPORT:** No

Most will have played this great twin-stick shooter in some guise or another, and few will be surprised that the leap to VR doesn't bring much in the way of change. It's cool to glance around the planet as you track targets and the 3D effects are neat, but it's hardly a showcase for the new tech. That said, a new *Battlezone*-like mode does let you take to the ground in a tank, which is decent – if limited – fun in the short term.

6

JOB SIMULATOR

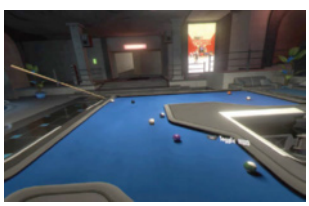


PUBLISHER: Owlchemy Labs | **DEVELOPER:** In-house
PRICE: £23.99 | **MOVE SUPPORT:** Yes

We really fell in love with *Job Simulator* when we played it using HTC Vive earlier in the year and while the charm and hilarity remains strong, its implementation through PSVR is sadly not as strong. This seems mainly to be a technical issue as this game really benefitted from the room-scale VR experience allowing for more accurate tracking of body and head movement. As it stands, we found this version to be glitchy and often a little frustrating.

5

HUSTLE KINGS VR

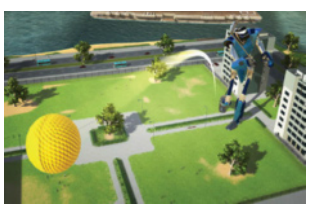


PUBLISHER: SIEE | **DEVELOPER:** EPOS GAME STUDIO
PRICE: £15.99 | **MOVE SUPPORT:** YES

The core *Hustle* *Kings* gameplay is solid and some of the modes and tables are a lot of fun, but some design choices for VR get in the way of a fully enjoyable experience. Placing the player so tight to the table can make lining up shots a little awkward. Having to warp around the table for new vantage points doesn't really help much, either. At the time of playing, we couldn't get much use out of Move, but we imagine DualShock control would be advised anyway.

5

100FT ROBOT GOLF

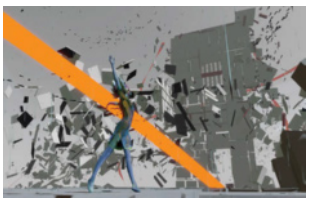


PUBLISHER: No Goblin | **DEVELOPER:** In-house
PRICE: £15.99 | **MOVE SUPPORT:** No

Feeling almost like a spiritual successor to *Ribbit King, 100ft Robot Golf* embraces its daftness to cater to the underserved comedy golf crowd. It's about speed rather than finesse, mastering the unique swing mechanics of each mech, blocking opponents' shots and levelling obstacles in order to be first to the pin. Both commentary and campaign are amusing (at least at first) but as entertaining as it may be, VR just makes it all feel even jankier.

6

BOUND

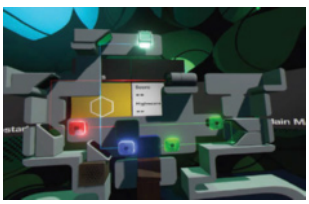


PUBLISHER: Sony | **DEVELOPER:** Plastic
PRICE: £15.99 | **MOVE SUPPORT:** No

The generally distant viewpoint of the core game presented a few issues both in terms of gameplay and appreciating *Bound*'s incredible animation, and both are improved by pulling in closer and being able to appreciate the studio's artistry. Camera placement and movement are still less than ideal but even so, getting lost in this abstract world while wearing a headset might be the best way to explore it, even if some of the old gameplay issues are still present.

7

TUMBLE VR



PUBLISHER: SCEE | **DEVELOPER:** Supermassive Games
PRICE: £7.99 | **MOVE SUPPORT:** Yes

We found this to be a thoroughly engrossing puzzle game, although we'll admit the concept of stacking blocks hardly seems like it ought to be. Somehow, this playschool-level experience finds new levels of tension and engagement through a VR headset and you must consider material type, weight and balance to build structures against different criteria. It's Move compatible, but we'd recommend using the DualShock 4 instead.

8

HEADMASTER

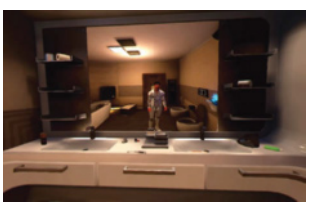


PUBLISHER: SCEE | **DEVELOPER:** Frame Interactive
PRICE: £15.99 | **MOVE SUPPORT:** No

***Headmaster* was one** of the most surprising games in the PSVR launch lineup, not least because it's really funny and rather good. With its Aperture-esque testing and hands-free gameplay, *Headmaster* is simple to understand but a challenge to master. Heading the ball into the goal may seem simple enough, but doing it past drone-propelled cardboard keepers is another matter entirely. You don't need to be a football fan to find enjoyment from this.

7

LOADING HUMAN: CHAPTER 1

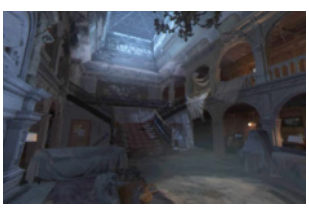


PUBLISHER: MAXIMUM GAMES | **DEVELOPER:** UNTOLD
PRICE: £34.99 | **MOVE SUPPORT:** YES

In attempting to meld a first-person perspective with gameplay that feels close to a point-and-click adventure, *Loading Human* is at least playing around with the VR formula. Being able to see your own body and interact with objects in the world can be pretty intense. A shame, then, that it all looks a little off as your arms feel like they're crossing over into your head. Narratively, it's reaching for a mature, considered story, but isn't quite there yet.

6

RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER



PUBLISHER: Square Enix | **DEVELOPER:** Crystal Dynamics | **PRICE:** £44.99 | **MOVE SUPPORT:** No

This anniversary release of *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* is pretty excellent and as a stand-alone game, we would score it pretty highly, but taking the *Blood Ties* VR experience on its own, it falls flat. It's interesting and Croft Manor is brilliantly recreated, but playing in VR adds little compared to the traditional third-person view. In fact, we found the free movement mode to be one of the most dizzying VR experiences at launch. Comfort mode is highly recommended.

4

ETA JANUARY | **PUB** CAPCOM | **DEV** IN-HOUSE | **TWITTER** @RE_GAMES

Resident Evil 7

A return to true horror, by way of indie influences

PS4

Don't get caught, it says. Don't get caught. If ever there were a statement that a *Resident Evil* game should make, then this is it. *Hey*, it practically screams, *remember back when ammo was scarce and the focus was largely on surviving? We're doing that again!*

And there's not a word of a lie to be found in that statement. Certainly, nobody is going to claim that this is an action game with horror trimmings. This is a pure survival experience, one set in an environment that does everything it can to make your skin crawl.

Our demo only took a moment to bring to mind some standout indie horror titles from the past half-decade. You're being pursued, and your only option is to get away. There is no monster here, though, at least not yet; only a deranged woman who takes hospitality very seriously.

She will kill you if she gets a hold of you. We should know. We got caught. Thrice. There was a certain shock factor involved with the first instance, although it had a lot to do with a tutorial prompt not appearing in time, and as we further explored the demo, concerns grew about the consistency of the cat-and-mouse rules at play here.

If we were to describe this sampling of *Resident Evil 7* in terms of mechanics alone, then it would be a stealth game. A stealth game where you're a helpless and terrified young adult rather than a super-spy, but still a stealth game. This makes it a bit troubling that we found it to be largely unclear as to if we were hidden or not, as there's no system in place to convey this.

At one point, while hiding behind a reliably sturdy box, we were found and swiftly murdered; replaying the same section, we turned the other way and watched the woman through gaping large holes in a wooden wall. Even when directly looking in our direction with lamp in hand, she never noticed us. Rather, she walked out to our previous hiding place, gave up, and stormed back inside.

> "THIS IS A PURE SURVIVAL EXPERIENCE SET IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT DOES EVERYTHING IT CAN TO MAKE YOUR SKIN CRAWL"

That said, her tantrums were a sight to behold. The entire visual styling of the game has a simple, slightly dated found footage aesthetic – likely to take some stress off of processing in order to ensure that it can run in VR – and the character behaviours seems to harken back even further. Foot stamping and arm swinging (in what brings to mind terms such as 'hissy-fit'), this deranged family (the Bakers) could well have been ripped right out of the era of fuzzy black-and-white television, and it's all that much creepier and more unnerving because of it.

Our first true puzzle came in the form of a spiky, oddly-shaped piece of metal that was just left lying about outside and that needed to be rotated in front of a light until it took the shape of a spider in order to open a hidden passage. So far, so classic *Resi*, then.

To the game's credit, even when creeping through the narrow passage – an obvious transitional sequence – we never felt truly safe, and in VR it could be truly claustrophobic.

What followed was again a point of mixed feelings. The purity of the game's desire to be a true piece of interactive horror was evident, but so was the feeling that the game was doing its best to create the illusion of reactive AI when in reality, it may very well be heavily scripted. The end of the demo was certainly intentionally linear: after finding the correct path forward, we found ourselves crouched in a passage beneath the house, taunted and told that there was nowhere left to run.

You get caught, and the demo closes with an interactive cinematic – possibly starring one of the characters from the *Beginning Hour* demo, but perhaps not – in which you get to see exactly what hospitality you were running from, and why. It's suitably deranged, and the tension that exists within the Baker family has a lot of potential to slather the horror theme with a generous helping of tension.

Resident Evil 7 remains a title with a lot riding on its shoulders, and may yet be a spectacular revival or a disappointment. Dummy fingers crossed for the former...

RESIDENT EVIL 7 is being cooked up in Capcom's renamed kitchen. More details here: **capcom.co.jp/residentevil7**







www.imagineshop.co.uk

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ It's the first major shake-up to the classic *Resi* formula since *RE4*, which was great.
- □ The first-person viewpoint brings back the tension of the old fixed camera view.
- ✕ It's one of the few triple-A games being developed with PlayStation VR in mind.
- ○ If the brief demo is anything to go by, it'll be absolutely terrifying in VR...

△○✕□ **The environments in *Resident Evil 7* have their work cut out for them. The game is taking an approach that focuses on what *might* be there, rather than what is, and each room needs to convey this.**

ETA DECEMBER | **PUB** SONY | **DEV** IN-HOUSE | **TWITTER** @PLAYSTATION

The Last Guardian

Yes, it is real. Yes, it is coming...

It all opens with the sound of children. It's hard not to notice this. Maybe these opening parts of *The Last Guardian* will end up posted online and maybe they won't, but one thing is for sure: you're not going to get the full audio experience. And even if a streaming site *could* deliver, it's unlikely your PC or smartphone speakers are going to be up to the task.

This, of course, is a classic dilemma for media experiences. Not everybody can afford a sweet TV, and fewer still elaborate audio setups, meaning that the full effect is easily lost. But if you are in such a position, make sure you add in a subwoofer. And if you have one already, consider connecting a second. Because *The Last Guardian* sounds ancient, mystical, and *deep*.

It's gorgeous, too. We knew this already, although technically speaking it still looks more like a supercharged PlayStation 3 game than it does an upcoming one for the PlayStation 4. Most notably, textures don't look as sharp as we've recently become accustomed to, and there are numerous instances of clipping where complex character animations are concerned.

From a design perspective, it smashes everything for six. The world looks ancient, mysterious, cultured, full and deep. Deep, in particular, is a term we keep on coming back to – there was a paucity of the airy lightness that has been present in much of the content shown up this point, and this connects both the visual and audio aspects of the aesthetic, and, we suspect, the mechanics as well.

There are some exceptions – and they all seem very intentional – but by and large, the opening sequences of *The Last Guardian* appear to be dark, devoid of natural light. Spaces are mostly enclosed and bass works overtime to give the world a fragile, hollowed-out feel. Mostly, it's ancient; brittle now, but mighty once, which makes it a terrifying place for a young boy to wake up.

> "SPACES ARE MOSTLY ENCLOSED AND BASS WORKS OVERTIME TO GIVE THE WORLD A FRAGILE, HOLLOWED-OUT FEEL"

This is communicated by the visuals, but it really is the sound that is the star of this sensory approach to storytelling. There is a surprising oomph to the boy's footsteps that says as much about these strange halls as the strange lighting and, with the volume pushed to wall-shaking volumes, it becomes apparent that Trico (that strange cat-bird creature) is not only a beast, but a huge one. Its breathing alone could make the sound design from *Jurassic Park* blush.

There's no escaping it – just about the first point of order in the gameplay is to remove large arrows from the sides of the beast, and it doesn't take kindly to such assistance. In one of several displays of the true difference in scale between the two, the boy is knocked free as thanks for his efforts in removing the first bolt, and there is true violence to just how swiftly he flies and tumbles. It's the first part of the demo when anything could be considered as light.

This extends to his visual design, which starts to make a bit more sense after sitting through the game's extended opening. His design is simple, his skin almost cartoonish – light and shadow don't seem to apply to him in the same way they do the rest of the world. He comes across as an outsider, here by accident. A mistake. Or maybe a curse. The only point of comparison are the ethereal blue and yellow butterflies that are flittering around the world.

More light enters once he finds a mirror shield, an artefact that causes Trico's eye's to create their own light display, and proves important for leading the beast around. In fact, leading Trico on seems pleasantly intuitive, meaning that the trademark character feel of Team Ico games (if the character is a young boy, then he moves and stumbles like one; don't expect snappy controls, but that's clearly a design choice rather than a fault) may be a key factor behind this game becoming an absolute favourite for many, if not quite for absolutely everyone.

THE LAST GUARDIAN is actually coming out soon, meaning this might be the last time we preview it. Get more here: **playstation.com**







www.imagineshop.co.uk

△○×□ **Interactions between boy and beast are a fundamental part of the game, the bond between the two growing and evolving over the course of the game. At first, Trico is untrusting and uncooperative, presenting intentional issues on a gameplay level.**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

△ We're finally starting to believe that it actually exists.

□ Trico's behavious makes it feel like a real wild animal, for the most part.

× That dog-cat-chicken thing is absolutely freaking adorable.

○ It wasn't cancelled after all, so hopefully that's a good thing...

△○×□ **Environments, despite having been originally crafted for PS3, are beautiful from an artistic and architectural standpoint. We'd expect no less from the *SOTC* team, though.**

ETA Q1 2017 | **PUB** BANDAI NAMCO | **DEV** TARSIER STUDIOS | **TWITTER** @LITTLENIGHTS

Little Nightmares

Tarsier CEO Ola Holmdahl talks grim worlds and bright prospects

PS4
ALSO COMING TO PS3

We feel as if we've been tracking the progress of Tarsier Studios for many years, pretty much since it announce a game called *City Of Metronome* in 2005. That title sadly didn't make it out and since then the team has expanded and made a reputation for itself working closely with Media Molecule, a studio with which it shares a lot of creative similarities. With *Little Nightmares*, it is finally stepping out to show what it can do on a solo project, as CEO Ola Holmdahl explains.

Could you talk us through the game's unique art direction a little and where that has come from?

What can I say? Tarsier by now is not six people – we're 50 and the team is not that many but it's significant and I do feel everyone contributes to this game, which is why when we look at it, it does look unique and different from everything we've done before. The core subject matter and the core aesthetic is powerfully influenced from our art director, Per Bergman, who is one of the founders, and also one of the concept artists we've picked up on the way, Jonas Berlin. They were a fantastic tag team. The core idea of the game came from a sort of a concept jam where Per drew a character, which was just a small girl in a yellow raincoat, very distinct, and Jonas was drawing these figures, these hulking, monstrous figures and there was a very interesting interplay between them.

How important has working alongside Media Molecule been for the team?

Hugely influential. I think Tarsier as a studio owes them a great debt. There was just a good energy that came out of the very early work with costumes and art support work, but then that we could grow in that relationship to be taken on as a lead studio with *LittleBigPlanet* on Vita, but also to do what was essentially in my eyes a collaboration with *Tearaway Unfolded*. They had half the team and we had half the team – we sort of translated the experience from handheld inputs to PS4. They were very specific, they asked for us by name and they said, 'we want some fresh thinking, some fresh energy, some fresh creative juice.' We've learnt a lot of discipline from them and a lot of useful creative skills that they still set the bar for, I feel – how to identify a concept, bring it to life, and feel out what the game is that goes with the concept. Those were shortcomings back in 2006 and one of the reasons *Metronome* never took off. Well, fool me once... I think Tarsier has learnt a lot of good lessons since then.

> "WE'RE NOT ABOUT BEING ROCKSTARS. WE WANT THE PRODUCT TO BE THE THING, NOT THE TEAM BEHIND IT"

Has it helped to be somewhat out of the limelight on these brands, just get the work done and do well without pressure?

We have a little small sort of commando fanbase, I feel. It's amazing and there are people who remember *Metronome*, even today. But then again, just look at our totem, the tarsier, it's the only mammal with individual eyeballs larger than its brain. And it's nocturnal and very shy. We're about the product. We're not about being rockstars. We want our own product to be out there, we want to be making our own games. It's fantastic to be working with Bandai Namco and seeing it happen and seeing the response, but we want the product to be the thing, not the team behind it.

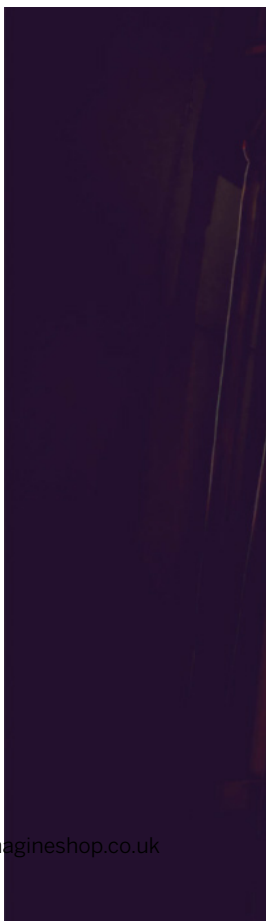
And the response so far seems to have been very good. How has that been?

It's been overwhelmingly positive. And we couldn't have asked for more. If you sat down and decided what is the best imaginable scenario, I don't think we could have done much better. I was thinking about it before, clearly I think one of our game designers said it best after Gamescom, 'finally we've achieved unsustainable levels of hype'. And that can be motivating, because we have a lot to live up to. It's fantastic to see people excited by the visuals, excited by the concept, by the trailers and then they come and play it and they walk away with a very big look on their face. They're stricken or they're happy or just absorbed. That, to me, feels very good. That they can queue up, play the thing and seem so mesmerised and happy afterwards.

LITTLE NIGHTMARES was dreamed up by Tarsier and already has a buzz around it. Find out more here: **little-nightmares.com**







WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

△ The Burton-esque grim fairytale look is both unique and oddly unsettling.

□ The studio has worked closely with Sony on *LittleBigPlanet* and *Tearaway*.

✕ It already has a publisher – could this be Bandai Namco's version of *Unravel*?

○ There's nothing else anything like *Little Nightmares* on PS4 right now.

△○✕□ **The dark atmosphere and tone of the game is wonderfully realised, bringing to mind great stop-motion animation in the movement and lighting Tarsier has crafted.**

ETA Q1 2017 | **PUB** MODE 7
DEV SMAC | **TWITTER** @TOKYO42GAME

Tokyo 42

Life on the murder scene

PS4

It's good to see that *Tokyo 42* has a sense of humour. We suspected that it was likely to, but trying to take a world this colourful and crazy seriously with such a withdrawn perspective would have been tough. *Tokyo 42* may be inspired by darker and more serious experiences like *Syndicate* or *Grand Theft Auto*, but at its heart it is all about fun and that comes out pretty quickly.

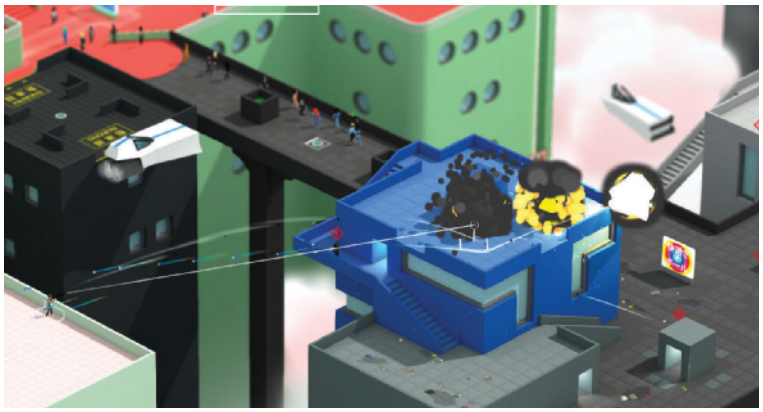
It all begins with you being framed for murder in a future Tokyo where, it appears, everyone pretty much lives on the rooftops of the city. Everything else is covered in fog. Up in the clouds you live in what appears to be a neon dystopia, demonstrated rather nicely by the fact that the 24-hour news can tap directly into your living room and show you on TV as it describes to viewers your crimes and promises the imminent arrival of the police. And what do you do? Become an assassin to flush out your tormentor, of course.

This is all explained away rather neatly with the idea that death is impossible in this new world where everyone takes pills that mean they come back to life after fatal encounters. As a result, murder should be impossible and killing is practically a slap on the wrist. With that in mind, you are free to unleash fury and mass carnage on the population of Tokyo, safe in the knowledge that no lasting damage will be caused.

The entire world can be spun around to change perspective, which is handy for navigating the open world of interconnecting buildings. Huge, daring leaps between structures are sometimes called for and getting the world lined up right for your jump can really help. Thankfully, you have *Matrix*-like abilities in this regard, so such death-defying antics are encouraged.

The perspective, art and animation all combine brilliantly to evoke a living city and getting to aim down the sights of your weapon, throw explosives and generally cause mayhem and see the world respond is pretty incredible. When things really kick off though, the game turns into a bullet-hell experience of gunfire, swords and terrified civilians. It can get pretty intense, certainly more so than the zoomed-out colourful style might suggest. One to watch, for sure.

TOKYO 42 is being cased by Smac Games and Mode 7. Hit the official site if you're after more information: **tokyo42.com**







△○×□ **Arena-based multiplayer promises to be pretty chaotic with a confined play area and multiple levels of each building to work through. The single-player looks intense enough but online, it could get pretty nuts.**



www.imagineshop.co.uk

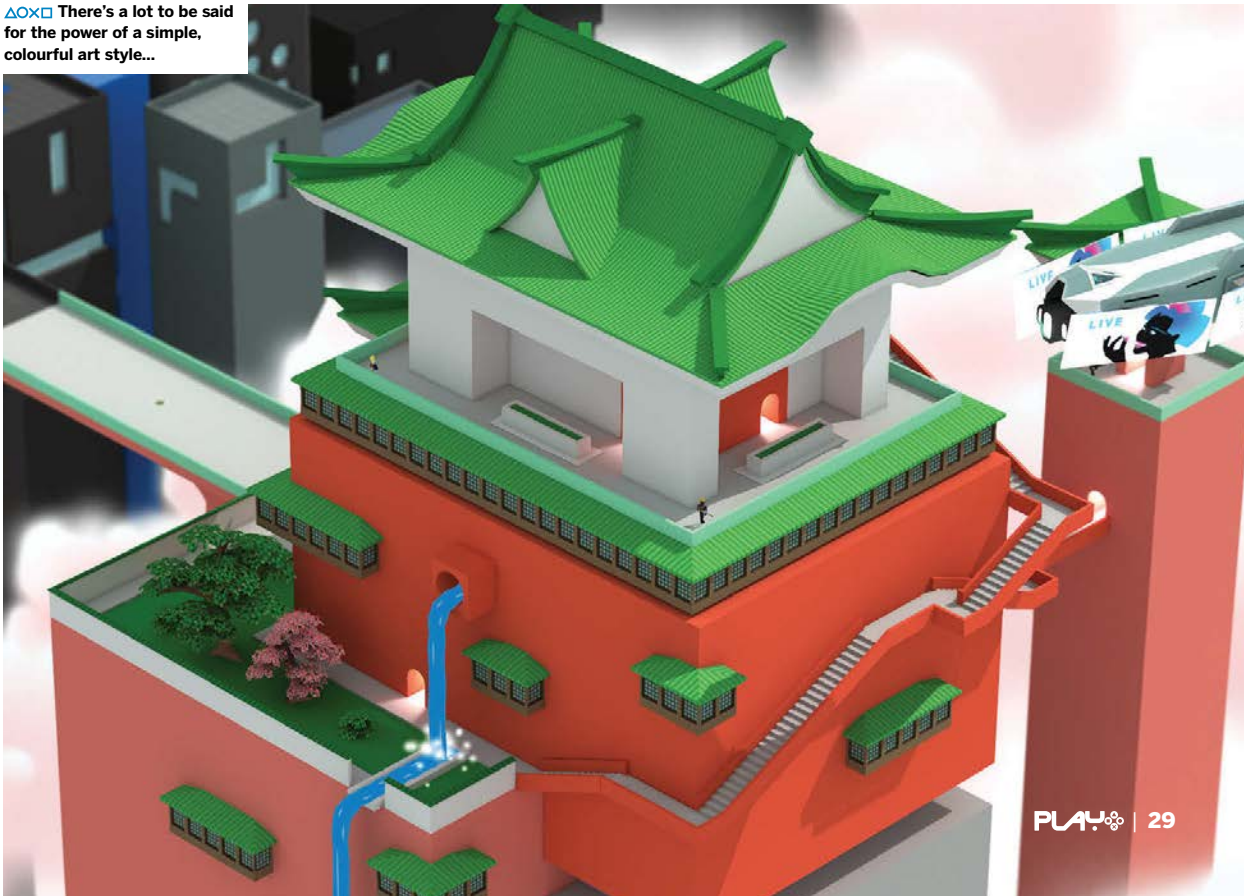


"INSPIRED BY DARKER GAMES LIKE GTA AND SYNDICATE BUT AT ITS HEART, TOKYO 42 IS ALL ABOUT FUN"

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ The influence of great games like *Worms*, *Syndicate* and *GTA* is clearly visible.
- □ It functions a little like *Assassin's Creed*'s surprisingly good multiplayer modes.
- ✕ As chaotic as things can get, skilful play should always allow you to come out on top.
- ○ There's a great sense of playfulness about the whole game.





△○✕□ **There's a lot to be said for the power of a simple, colourful art style...**



★★★★★ TEN OF THE BEST ★★★★★

LAUNCH TITLES

THE FINEST GAMES THAT LAUNCHED ALONGSIDE PLAYSTATION PLATFORMS



RIDGE RACER

■ **IT'D BE RUDE** not to start at the beginning for this, so let's return to Day One of PlayStation. While there were only a handful of games available at launch, Namco's port of arcade classic *Ridge Racer* showed the world that the new console was capable of delivering arcade-quality experiences in the home, soon backed up by the likes of *Tekken* and *Dead Or Alive*, among others. RIIIIIIIIIDGE RACER!



RIGS: MECHANIZED COMBAT LEAGUE

■ **PLAYSTATION VR NEEDED** a standout original title to launch alongside it, and it has exactly that in *RIGS*. Strapped into the headset, you really do feel like you're piloting a mech as you cane around arenas blasting enemies, scoring goals and dunking on fools. It's something you need to get used to as the quick first-person movement can feel awkward at first but once it clicks, it's simply incredible – a clear PSVR standout and a unique thrill not to be missed.



UNCHARTED: GOLDEN ABYSS

■ **VITA ENJOYED ONE** of the strongest launches of any console in memory, with all bases covered and plenty of heavy hitters available on day of release. Nate's portable adventure, while slightly hamstrung by Bend's insistence on making full use of Vita's new functionality, was enormously impressive, recreating the jaw-dropping vistas of the console games on a device only a fraction the size. What a way to start...



TEKKEN: DARK RESURRECTION

■ **THIS IS A** bit of an odd one, but while PS3 didn't exactly have the best launch, the rollout of PSN came with a handful of gems and this updated fighter was the best of the bunch. *Tekken* has always been a big part of the PlayStation experience and this enhanced and improved version of *Tekken 5* almost made up for the failings of *Tekken 4. Almost.*

REZ INFINITE



■ **MIZUGUCHI'S CULT CLASSIC** can't seem to make its mind up – it launched on a Sega console, got ported to a Sony one, saw an HD remake on a Microsoft platform and is now back home on PlayStation is definitive form. The trippy rail shooter works better than ever when you're isolated in VR, its thumping beats, pulsing visuals and tight gameplay all even better with PSVR. The newly-added Area X is the star attraction, though – a brand new experience purpose-built for VR and all the better for it.



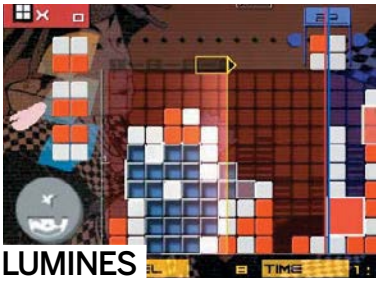
SSX

■ **LOOKING BACK AT** the PS2's launch lineup, there's not nearly as much quality there as we remember there being, but that comes down to being caught up in the hype machine. On reflection, several games do stand out. *TimeSplitters* was a decent proof-of-concept from some ex-*GoldenEye* devs, but didn't truly find form until the second game, while *Fantavision* was a unique and entertaining puzzle game, even if it didn't offer much bang for your buck. All said and done, it was snowboarding stunt racer *SSX* that won the day, although even that would be vastly improved upon with multiple sequels.



WIPEOUT 2048

■ **IF YOU'RE TRYING** to show off what a new piece of hardware can do, a *WipEout* game is an obvious choice – they typically have style, crisp visuals and insane pace, and seeing this running on Vita for the first time was truly mind-blowing. We knew the handheld was powerful, but this was just leagues beyond what we were expecting – true console-quality visuals on a portable device years before mobiles and tablets had reached the point where they could boast the same. We'd have loved to see it return for PSVR's launch (we think... it might have hurt) but sadly, it was not to be.



LUMINES

■ **REMEMBER WHEN DEVS** used to be able to get away with charging full price for a puzzle game? Those were the days. Looking back, a few of them were genuinely worth all that dollar – the likes of *Super Puzzle Fighter II* and *Tetris* offer bottomless entertainment, and we'd be inclined to add this musical block-busting beauty to that list. A light rhythm-action vibe and great soundtrack made this a highlight of the PSP launch, and we still play it to this day.



RESOGUN

■ **PS4 HAD PLENTY** of *good* games at launch, but there was something of a shortage of *great* ones. Trust twin-stick experts Housemarque to deliver on that front – *Resogun* was the jewel in the crown when PS4 was released, an exclusive arcade-style shooter with deceptively complex visuals and gameplay. Best of all, it was free to those with PS Plus subscriptions. Which, given it was required for online play on PS4, was a lot of us.



RIDGE RACER

■ **NO, THAT'S NOT** a mistake or a duplicate entry – blame Namco for being awful at coming up with new titles for original games. Sharing its name with the classic PSone launch title, this PSP release was a highlight of the launch of Sony's first handheld and almost everyone was blown away when they first saw it running. It's a shame that the Vita debut felt like a bit of a cash-grab – *Ridge Racer* could have secured its third PlayStation launch podium place.

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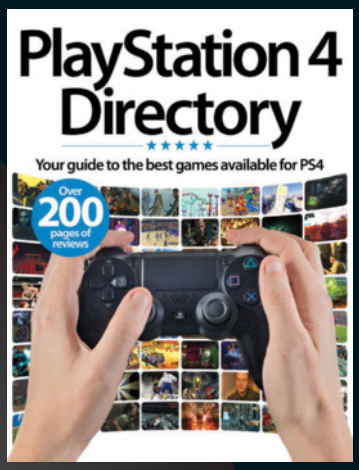


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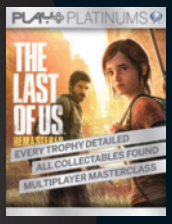








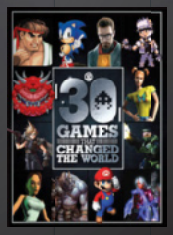


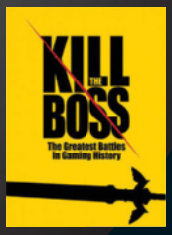


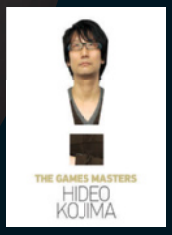












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"THERE'S SO MUCH VALUE FOR MONEY THAT IT'S DIFFICULT NOT TO RECOMMEND IT"

△○×□ While *PES* might arguably still have the edge in terms of gameplay, *FIFA* as ever nails presentation and match day feel to such a degree as to make the competition look laughable.









△○×□ Fans of Ultimate Team will rejoice as the mode is better than ever. It now incorporates eSports into its design, where players can now compete in weekly leagues in an attempt to begin earning money and playing on the global stage.

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FIFA 17

The Journey is only the beginning



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
EA Sports

DEVELOPER
EA Canada

PSN PRICE
£49.99

PLAYERS
1-22

Success leads to complacency that in turn breeds contempt – that's the inherent problem with a development cycle that favours speed over finesse. With a resurgent rival in the form of *Pro Evolution Soccer*, EA had to return to the pitch for 2017 fresh and vibrant, avoiding claims complacency by innovating in a handful of key areas. *FIFA 17* is, then, EA's attempt to build a sport simulation that covers every eventuality of play. There is, in actuality, so much content packed away inside of it that it's almost unreasonable to consider that any one player will ever get to see it all.

Between *FIFA*'s card-collecting Ultimate Team package, the stabilisation of Online Seasons, Be A Pro and even the simplest of exhibition matches, it would almost be greedy to demand more. But here we are, staring down a 15-hour campaign mode that looks to blur the lines between *Mass Effect* and pretty much every sporting fairytale that Hollywood has ever tried to shove down your throat.

No, we haven't gone completely crazy. When we say *Mass Effect*, we mean it. The Journey charts the rise of 17-year old Alex Hunter, taking you through the first year of a Premier League career in what amounts to a highly improved Be A Pro simulation. You'll need to partake in weekly training drills, fight for your place in the Starting XI of your favourite team and have to deal with big money signings ruining all of your hard work. Two points of note: firstly, having to deal with the realities of being a young player on the rise meant understanding some harsh realities about the way in which the Premier League operates – we've never had so much respect for Arsène Wenger's commitment to not spending any money. Secondly, at some point The Journey will force you out on loan, and starting a career at Arsenal only to end up begrudgingly choosing between Aston Villa, Norwich or Newcastle was a serious gut punch. Thanks for that, EA.

But anyway, we digress. *The tenuous Mass Effect connection.* To help really show off FIFA's transition from the tired *Ignite Engine* to the all-powerful *Frostbite Engine,* EA Canada enlisted the assistance of BioWare to bring a little flair to the new mode. Interlaced with fully voiced and motion captured cut-scenes – heaping us much emotional baggage onto events as humanly possible – you'll encounter dialogue options that let you take command of post-match interviews and integral story moments. Think of yourself as Commander Shepard, only, you aren't tasked with saving the world but instead trying to usurp your best-friend-turned-asshole from the starting line-up.



△○×□ **While the 'goal feel' still might lag behind *PES*, it's certainly satisfying to score goals in *FIFA 17*, especially with the introduction of proper low-bearing shots.**

It's linear with a likeable cast, and the story is heart-warming albeit without any originality. In spite of all the reasons to hate on the idea of a single-player mode in *FIFA*, The Journey actually brings the entire package together. It isn't the most complex game mode in the world – and you'll routinely become frustrated with an on-the-pitch scoring system that seems all too eager to punish you for the tiniest mistakes – but there's nothing quite like The Journey out there. It keeps *FIFA* from feeling stale, even if this year's iteration is doing very little to alter or improve upon the on-pitch action.

As you'd expect, *FIFA 17* looks gorgeous. That should honestly come as no surprise, the technology powering the likes of *Star Wars Battlefront* and *Mass Effect: Andromeda* is no slouch after all. Player likeness is improved, 15 of the Premier League bosses have been scanned into the game (many of which are simply unsettling) and the volumetric lighting makes a particular impression on a misty evening kick-off. Sadly, this can often feel like a mere distraction – something to keep you from peering too closely at the old bones beneath the rejuvenated skin.

If *PES* has been transformative over the past three seasons, *FIFA* has been laboured. EA has slowly been bringing improvements to its flagship sports sim, though this year's iteration feels lacking in innovation. The basics are as familiar as ever, the passing, shooting and dribbling are all tight and responsive when isolated, but when they come together it can feel as if you are playing through football through quicksand; players are once again over-animated, where they often feel as if they are compensating for every nuance imaginable, and that can bring play to a frustrating, calculating halt.

One of the biggest shifts here is with physicality, and with that comes complications to attacking and defending. Up front, those centre forwards with big strength stats will relentlessly hold defenders off of the ball – especially as you begin escalating the difficulty up to World Class. It's a nightmare to defend against strikers with the physicality to deal with insane amounts of pressure – they soak it up, impossibly trapping the ball with such ferocity that it can only be unleashed when a clear shot on goal opens up. On the flip side, of course, play a few games with a striker such as Olivier Giroud leading your front line and you'll have no problem muscling your way into plenty of space and scoring opportunities; defending has taken yet another hit in *17*, though *FIFA* has always favoured attacking with force over a well-balanced game across the pitch.

It's difficult to judge *FIFA 17*. There is so much value for money that it's difficult to not give it a recommendation. Sure, *PES 2017* may once again rule the play through the midfield, but *FIFA 17* has so much to offer off the pitch that it's difficult to not be satisfied. As long as you can get your head around the possession-focused style of play in *FIFA*, you'll most likely have no qualms with its gameplay, but it's everything else that really sells it this year. Yes, the licences will of course be a deal-breaker for some – as they are every year – but some subtle improvements to Ultimate Team (and its online security), the introduction of The Journey (which also has some lovely UT incentives built in) and the level of polish draped across the rest package... well, it's honestly hard to be disappointed.

VERDICT

ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS DOMINANCE

8
PlayMag_UK scored **8** for FIFA 17
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XCOM 2

In the end, time is the end of all things

PS4

Time is our most precious commodity. We are handed our allocation of it and once it's gone, it's gone forever; eventually, with time, so too are we. In *XCOM 2*, it never feels like time is on your side. Instead, it seems that it, and the lives of those entrusted to your command, is forever fading – a swift descent towards death, if you will. In the grand scheme of things, *XCOM 2* tasks you with fighting for humanity's survival, but most of the time you'll find yourself fighting for the individuals. And most of the time, you're going to fail.

There's an argument to be made that it's the constant, looming sense of peril that makes *XCOM 2* one of the finest strategy games ever made. It's an unrelenting assault on your senses; forcing pause at every enforced turn as you attempt to lead a pack of poorly-geared, barely-trained, heavily injured troops running the gauntlet to secure some piece of alien tech or defecting human scientist. The odds are completely stacked against you from the moment you begin a fresh campaign and it never lets up – if you thought that was the case with 2012's *XCOM: Enemy Unknown*, you're in for a rude awakening.

It's perhaps only developer Firaxis that would have the cojones to set up such a perilous game scenario as this, but then the studio had no choice. *XCOM* has always been celebrated as a difficult franchise, but how on Earth do you provide challenge to a player base that has relished the opportunity to pump hundreds of hours attempting Impossible Iron Man mode runs (where the difficulty is not only set to soul-destroying, but the ability to create multiple save files is torn away from players)? Well, you just make it soul-destroying from the off. Set 20 years after the events of original game, Firaxis makes the assumption that you probably failed to save humanity first time around and so that's where *XCOM 2* kicks off. That's right, this is a sequel that begins rooted in the fail state of its predecessor – like we said, serious cojones.

The invaders have won and an alien-led dictatorship know as the Advent is ruling over the earth with an iron fist; a clinical dystopia where infractions mean imprisonment and defiance equals death. The remnants of the human Resistance are scattered, attempting to rise up and rally against the Advent from the shadows. You're on the offensive now – no longer are you sat defending locations and responding to threats one at a time. This time, you're causing them.

The shift from tactical defensive strategies to desperate guerrilla tactics has had some radical implications on the pace and gameplay of the traditional *XCOM* formula. Sure, you'll still be building an army of ragtag soldiers (foolishly imbuing each of them with the identity and look of your closest friends, enemies and partners – it won't end well, trust us), researching new technologies, acquiring resources, and putting it all to use in turn-based strategy battles. But with the tide turned against you, the focus is on sabotaging alien operations across the globe and making small dents in the enemy's war machine in any way that you can manage. Firaxis has tied the narrative and gameplay together more critically this time around; every tactical decision and shot fired can have grave implications on your team and overall progress, every action has a weighted reaction.

Your soldiers drop into combat concealed, a new mechanic in *XCOM 2*, in which you are given the freedom to move around the procedurally generated scenarios and get a feel for the action and enemy placement before engagement. Sneaking through the fog of war past enemies and coordinating complex ambushes on unsuspecting patrols is exhilarating every single time. It elevates the idea of guerrilla warfare more than anything we've experienced before, though a tactical manoeuvre has a tendency to go wrong just as often as it succeeds. Putting the pieces in place before a firefight takes as much consideration as finishing one does; seeing your troops fall one by one after a seemingly great plan unravels in front of your eyes can be truly heartbreaking.

The focus on stealth and swift hit-and-run tactics brings a dynamism to *XCOM* that we never realised was missing to begin with; a rare success for a sequel in this day and age. Still, while you might feel like you have the time to consider every possibility, *XCOM 2* has a tendency to put you up against the clock: recover this loot in five turns, defend this station in six, get to this scientist defector in nine otherwise it's game over. It's here where adrenaline can get the better of your tactical brain, forcing commanders to make rash plays and power grabs in a desperate rush to recover the resources required to halt the steady stream of shit coming your way. But encounters in *XCOM 2* have a tendency to unfold in original and striking ways every time you play.



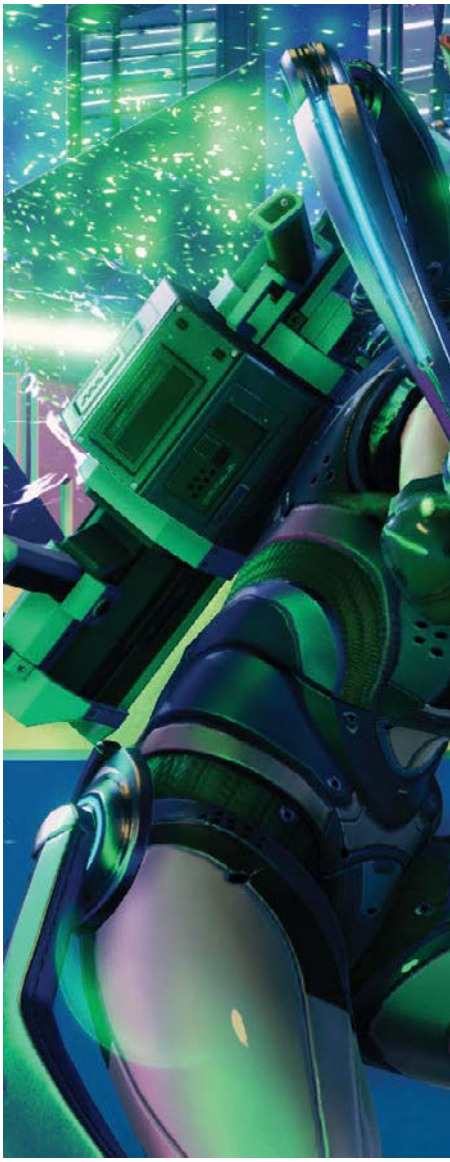
DETAILS

PUBLISHER
2K Games

DEVELOPER
Firaxis

PSN PRICE
£49.99

PLAYERS
1-2

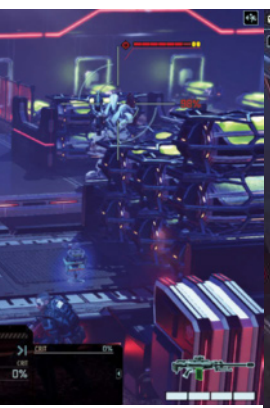




△○×□ **You'll spend much of your time juggling numbers in *XCOM 2*, desperately trying to work out whether a low hit chance is worth the risk or whether you can sit in Overwatch for another turn...**

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ONE-ON-ONE

XCOM 2 **builds upon the multiplayer experience and structure introduced in *Enemy Unknown*, which sees you and another player able to jump into pre-built maps and do battle until one of you falls. You're given a fixed amount of points at the outset of a game to build out your squad of human and alien units, before heading out against your opponent; it's a terribly simple setup that works well. It's also incredibly rewarding being able to take control of the enemy units you've been cursing for hours throughout the campaign. Just be wary of the player that fields an entire squad of Chrysalids – there's a certain circle of Hell reserved for those miscreants...**

△○×□ **Customisation is far more robust this time around, which only makes the inevitable deaths of your friends and loved ones even harder to take. You WILL lose people in *XCOM 2*.**





△○×□ **The overview map of the globe will cause much frustration as it steadily shows your loosening grip on the situation at hand.**

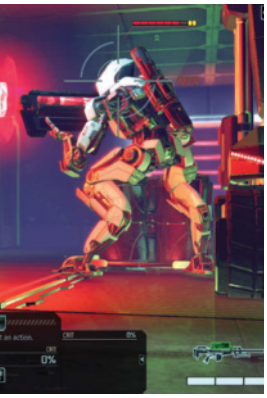




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Where *Enemy Unknown* could grow a little tiresome on multiple playthroughs, *XCOM 2* seems to have an endless supply of longevity. Every component is constantly shifting and changing, and you'll never find one tactic or squadron of soldiers capable of tackling every threat laid out in front of you. With maps displaying more verticality than before, snipers and sightlines seem more important, but do you dare leave a specialist on the bench when they can attempt to hack Advent security towers and heal your squad from afar in a tight situation? Do you invest in building psi-operatives to give the aliens a taste of their own mind manipulation or take your armoured-to-all-Hell assault Captain out in the field with a debilitating shotgun?

"SEEING YOUR TROOPS FALL ONE BY ONE IN FRONT OF YOUR VERY EYES CAN BE HEARTBREAKING"

There's always something to worry about in *XCOM 2*. With the pressure constantly piling on, it can get a little exhausting, especially when things don't go your way (which is most of the time), but there's something about the slickness of the systems and sheer breadth of options available that keeps you engaged. Keeping your squad alive is a constant struggle; getting them back to your flying base – dubbed the Avenger – without critical wounds taking them out of the fight for weeks is, at times, seemingly impossible. This is part of the wonderful *XCOM* cycle though, wherein you find your best soldiers sat in the medical bay while you desperately, helplessly feed rookies to the slaughterhouse.

It's the sheer depth of options, array of tactical decisions available, the endless considerations to be made, and overall unpredictability of enemy movements and tactics that combines to make *XCOM 2* so damned playable, though. Storming through a scenario unscathed is captivating, struggling through an engagement is fist-clenching, and, ultimately, watching your ex-girlfriend's avatar get mercilessly gunned down by a group of Sectoids proves to be a bittersweet moment; sure she's a heartbreaker, but she was the best damned sharpshooter in the squad. Humanity is doomed. But our time with *XCOM 2* is not. Through success or failure, *XCOM 2* has a way of bringing very real, physical emotions to the fore. You'll make attachments with your soldiers, with the state of the world and with each individual engagement, and that manifests itself unwittingly in the real world. Not many games can say the same.

The thrill of the action also has a way of following you back to base. Like its predecessors, *XCOM 2* has an overarching layer of tactical consideration that often forces you into desperate win or lose scenarios. Establishing links with rogue survivor cells, scooping up resources and widening your influence into new nations is always done with an eye on the progress bar towards failure that beams unwaveringly at the top of the world map. *XCOM 2* ensures that its out-of-combat considerations are powered by a constant state of motion and tension; once you reach the endgame, you quickly get the sense that one wrong tactical deployment or decision could spell the end of your entire campaign.

Managing resources, expanding the facilities of the Avenger base, building tactical upgrades and enhancing your troops is common practice in *XCOM*, though there's one location that represents the game better than all else – the bar. It acts as a memorial of sorts to your fallen brethren, displaying an ever-expanding list that represents your surmounting failures in combat. Looking over the names of the departed recalls a vivid memory of the time, place and scenario that led to their place on the list. The rookie who was crushed by the thunderous fists of a Faceless during Operation Tomb Crypt; the Lieutenant whose bright idea of flanking across rooftops ultimately led to him finding discomfort in the coils of a Viper Snake; the Captain stabbed through the heart by a Chrysalid so the rest of the squad could escape unscathed in Operation Star Hammer... what a hero. It's the fallen stars that you'll remember once the gunfire subsides.

It's a shame, then, that *XCOM 2* is lacking the polish that would truly reflect its status as one of the all-time greats. There are times where its difficulty swings from challenging to outright unfair. Games such as this live and die by their rules – enemies are restricted, largely, by the same logic and chance that we are, though this comes crumbing down when they blast through walls, dodge shotgun blasts from point-blank range, and generally defy the odds to survive. Your fun is constantly hanging on the game communicating fairly, and when it fails to do so, it can ruin some of the appeal.

Such problems are but a blip in an otherwise stunning strategy experience, however. Clever design runs through nearly every aspect of *XCOM 2*, as you might expect from so seasoned a strategy studio as Firaxis. The game forces you to think on different levels for every operation, to play with tactics and to experiment with daring manoeuvres at every opportunity, if only in the daft hope that your Hail Mary mission idea actually pays off for once. Every level of the game's design has not only been refined, but seamlessly interwoven to interact without you being any the wiser. It ensures that *XCOM 2* always feels like it's pushing you to try, coaxing you to entertain the idea of success in the face of what looks to be certain failure.

The looming presence of dread is constant, and that makes your victories all the sweeter. With time against you every step of the way, each minute spent in the company of your squad becomes a blessing – even as you come to realise you'll likely be toasting their virtual victories in the bar by the time the evening is out. In the end, time has a way of sneaking up and murdering even the best of us; never has that been more crushingly documented than it has been in *XCOM 2*. And never have we been more accepting of it, either.

VERDICT

RELENTLESS STRATEGY DEFINED BY ITS TACTICAL BRILLIANCE

9

PlayMag_UK scored **9** for XCOM 2

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Destiny: Rise Of Iron

Honk if you love Wolfpack Rounds



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Bungie

PSN PRICE
£24.99

PLAYERS
1-12

PS4

You can't help but admire the Exotic legs on *Destiny*. For a game that was slammed at launch for how little content there was compared to what had been shown off in the run-up to release, Bungie's ridiculously tight core systems have kept numbers healthy and ensured huge spikes in new and returning Guardians with every single content drop. Few shooters can boast living into their third year with a sizeable chunk of their player base intact – arguably only *Battlefield 4* this generation, aside from *Destiny* – and while this latest update doesn't make such bold strides as *The Taken King*, that's because the last few content drops already did such a good job of reforging the *Destiny* experience into what many expected from the off.



Story content is brief but largely satisfying (only the pointless reverse run of the Dust Palace really falls flat), but it's the stuff that surrounds it that truly makes *Rise Of Iron* worthwhile. A record book akin to that introduced to document Moments Of Triumph tracks your accomplishments across all areas of the game, ensuring that rewards in the form of extra loot are drip-fed throughout your time with the expansion.

The new Patrol area is neat and surprisingly expansive, with new mission types and secrets to unravel, if not to the same degree as the Dreadnaught; new and reworked Strikes freshen up playlists and refine the loot system, plus the redone Sepiks Perfected boss theme by Periphery's Misha Mansoor is just incredible; new Crucible maps seem to slot into rotation well, while new mode Supremacy (basically Kill Confirmed – loot the Crests dropped by defeated enemies to score, return friendly ones to deny the enemy points) presents an interesting shift in the meta, if one that clearly favours close-range engagement in terms of both gear and Supers. It's the new Raid that comes out on top, however, and it's arguably the best one yet – areas are large and rife for exploration, jump puzzles are kept mercifully brief, every boss fight feels original and exciting and there's a laser focus on skill and coordination during encounters, plus the rewards it offers are largely excellent.

It's difficult to see what more could have been done within the aging core framework of *Destiny*, especially if rumours of much of the team already busying themselves with a sequel are to be believed. Content continues to roll out and be discovered, as it likely will throughout *Destiny*'s third year – seasonal events will return and Hard mode for Wrath Of The Machine is about to drop at the time of writing, although it feels like there will need to be another decent update (akin to the one we saw in April, if not larger – update those old Raids please, Bungie) if the game is to make it to the end of its third year in as great a state as it stands today.

VERDICT

A STRONG IF EXTREMELY FAMILIAR UPDATE

8

PlayMag_UK scored **8** for
Destiny: Rise Of Iron

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



△○×□ **For some reason, there's a new Exotic sword rather than an axe like the one used in both the story and marketing. Seems like something of a missed opportunity to us...**

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△○×□ **Scorch Cannons now come in all three elemental flavours, although they all handle exactly the same. Remember to hold the trigger for even more damage...**

"IT'S HARD TO SEE WHAT MORE COULD HAVE BEEN DONE WITHIN THE AGING FRAMEWORK"

NBA 2K17

Hoop dreams



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
2K Games

DEVELOPER
Visual Concepts

PSN PRICE
£54.99

PLAYERS
1-10

PS4

The problem with sports games is that, as a rule, they're extremely iterative affairs – something that can make measuring their quality fairly difficult. This is especially true for 2K's basketball franchise, as it has been operating at a high level for many years now. Ultimately, *NBA 2K17* succeeds in many of the same areas as last year's effort, without necessarily representing a seismic, tangible change. It's basketball, though, and it's fun, so who cares?

As has become normal for this series, *NBA 2K17* showcases the intricacies of basketball brilliantly, whether through its ever-changing shot animations depending on your momentum and position, or its attention to detail when it comes to players themselves. Dribbling, shooting and jockeying your opponent on defence is weighty and authentic without feeling slow and cumbersome. Utilising the right stick to execute the perfect crossover or spin move to pull your man off balance before driving to the hoop is authentic and satisfying. What we're saying is, in terms of gameplay, it's pretty much the full package.

MyCareer is always an interesting prospect when approaching one of these games, as 2K has a penchant for striking up seemingly strange partnerships with celebs. Last year, Spike Lee wrote the story for this create a player mode – this year, the mode opens with Michael B Jordan of *The Wire* and *Creed* fame messing around with Kobe Bryant. MyCareer feels a bit more irreverent in *2K17* – a welcome change from Lee's storyline from last year. Aside from this, modes like MyGM are a decent time sink, and we had a lot of fun taking a couple of players out onto the playground in Blacktop mode.

And yet, despite all of the positives on show here, *NBA 2K17* brought us dangerously close to that uncrossable line whereafter nothing remains but undiluted, irrepressible rage. Admittedly, we were installing a digital copy of the game (and our typically shoddy UK broadband wasn't playing nice), but getting the bloody game on our hard drive took *hours*. Why a sports game is a 60GB install when From Software managed to get *Dark Souls III* down to around 20 is beyond us.

Following the lengthy install, we were confronted with 2K's MyPlayer account signup, which has been present in previous years but seemed particularly annoying this time around – as in, uPlay levels of annoying. Still, forceful data capture and ridiculous file sizes aside, *NBA 2K17* still represents the best approximation of basketball you can play anywhere (other than hitting the court yourself). Handling, graphics and a significant amount of different game modes make this a solid sports effort that, year after year, manages to outstrip most others.

VERDICT

A SOLID AND WELCOME RETURN

8

PlayMag_UK scored **8** for NBA 2K17

Follow our scores on JUSTA SCORE



△○×□ **While pulling the camera back is useful on a gameplay level, missing out on the insane detail of the game is a shame. Still, there are plenty of highlights and replays that show everything up close...**

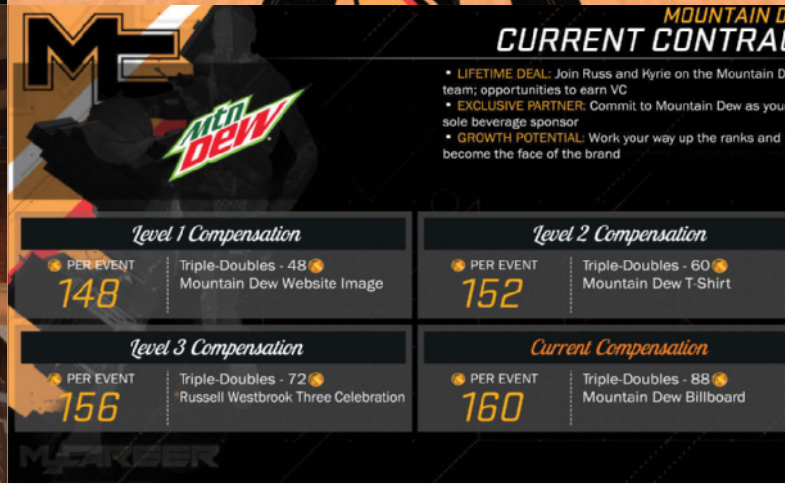
www.imagineshop.co.uk

△○×□ **Player likenesses are as impressive as ever – presentation in general is outstanding, although that's pretty much par for the course at this point. This team clearly knows its stuff.**











"THE ORIGINAL GAME STILL STANDS PROUD AS THE BIG DADDY OF THE FRANCHISE"



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BioShock: The Collection

Everybody's gone back to the Rapture



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
2K Games

DEVELOPER
In-house

PSN PRICE
£44.99

PLAYERS
1

PS4

Time can be cruel to videogames. Something that was lauded upon release can be hated by today's audience. Have you ever tried to play *Jet Set Willy*, or any other 8-bit 'masterpiece' for that matter? You'd have more fun staring intently at a *Coronation Street* omnibus for 12 hours straight. *BioShock* is at that point of contention – ten years is more than enough time for a game to age like a fine wine, or to rot away unlike the food you find in Rapture's bins.

With *BioShock: The Collection*, 2K has attempted to preserve the series' memory and given it a Steinmann-like facelift. While the sequels are serviceable games which are nice to have around, it feels as though more time and care has been dedicated to the original. Extras such as a museum of creatures and concepts that didn't quite make it into the game and Director's Commentary film reels to be found make the original descent into Rapture all the more worthwhile – it's also the best game of the three. On the whole, though, *BioShock: The Collection* is certainly less remaster and more update – like tuning an engine of a classic car rather than replacing it entirely, akin to the Criterion Collection Blu-rays for films.

All three games play like their respective PC versions, so we're treated an almost-solid 60fps with a few drops – most of which we experienced in the Skyrail sections of Infinite – which would make any member of the PC Master Race happy. As a result, the games feel significantly more responsive, although they are still hampered by the clunky aiming and movement the games originally drew critical ire for upon release. Aesthetically, each game has received tweaks, with diminishing returns the closer you get to the present day. *BioShock* and *BioShock 2* benefit from new lighting and water effects and present Rapture with a level of graphical fidelity we have not seen from it before. It's not in line with modern visuals, sure, but *The Collection* definitely manages to preserve the games as best they can be without receiving full graphical reconstructions.

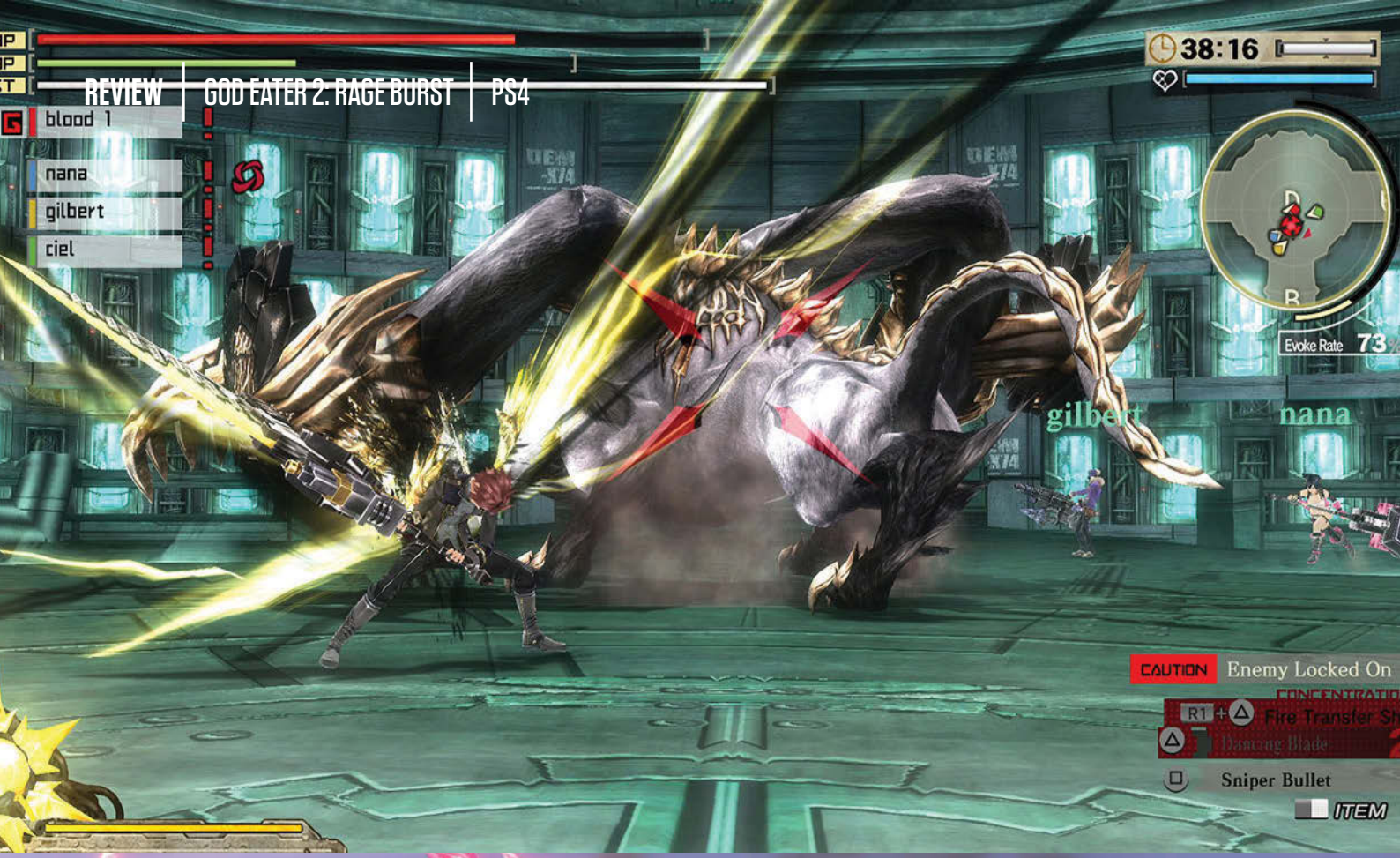
Our main criticism, then, is of the games themselves, which have been dragged into the current generation of gaming, warts and all. That is to say, if you disliked any *BioShock* game when it came out for whatever reason, you'll still despise it today. *BioShock*, thankfully, has stood the test of time well and can still stand proud as the Big Daddy of the series. It feels a little bit dated, being a much slower first-person affair than you may be used to today. Its sequels, however, remain as divisive as they were on release. *BioShock 2* remains a competent-at-best successor, albeit with more satisfying combat than its predecessor, while *Infinite* is still a pseudo-topical follow-up redeemed by excellent performances and set pieces.

This is very much a game for the fans. If you're a zealot for Ryan and Comstock, or if you enjoyed your stay in the cities of Rapture and Columbia and were thinking of heading back at some point, book your return journey now – you'll have just as good a time as you did before. Just don't expect much beyond a few slight cosmetic improvements here and there.

VERDICT

NOT MUCH HAS CHANGED BUT WE LIVE UNDERWATER

7
PlayMag_UK scored **7** for
BioShock: The Collection
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE





"THERE'S MORE OF AN EMPHASIS ON STORY THAN IN ANY OF CAPCOM'S HUNTING GAMES"

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God Eater 2: Rage Burst

The Aragami killer



PS4

There's been a distinct Rathalos-shaped hole in the PlayStation library ever since *Monster Hunter Tri* made the jump to Wii and while Capcom's series continues to serve the hunting needs of those with Nintendo platforms, the battle rages on to find a proper replacement on Sony devices. Vita has had a great run in this regard – *Soul Sacrifice, Toukiden* and *Freedom Wars* are all great – but the only option on PS4 so far is the port of *Toukiden* update, *Kiwami*. While another upscaled handheld game is unlikely to change the landscape that much, options are never a bad thing.

While *Monster Hunter Generations* sees the barrier dropped to an all-time low, pretenders to the throne continue to revel in complexity. Even to veterans, the amount of variables here will be daunting at first. Each weapon has multiple forms and can be tweaked in different ways, including a complex ammo customisation system – whether you want a steady stream of elemental fire or a fancy bouncing (and repeatedly exploding) shot, it's simply a case of piecing ammo parts together and setting how it will behave, although larger, more complex variants will be more expensive to use in the field.

That's not something you need to concern yourself with too much until difficulty starts to ramp up, however, since the various melee tools (along with the Devour ability of each weapon) are more often than not enough to get the job done. Each type – striking, piercing and so on – proves more effective on different breakable parts of bosses, meaning there's a lot of research or practice to be done if you want to get the most loot per run and in turn, improve your gear as quickly as possible.

While structurally similar to *Monster Hunter*, there's far more of an emphasis on story here than there has been in any of Capcom's hunting games. Your tastes will dictate whether that's a good or a bad thing – while the oddly-dressed anime stereotypes don't spin a dreadful yarn here, it certainly slows things down enough to be frustrating when a cutscene might do little more than remind you that one of the characters really likes sandwiches.



△○×□ **Those who care more about hunting than story aren't especially well-served here, as the curious cast of characters takes every opportunity to chat about something or other, usually of the inane variety.**

Like most of its brethren, *God Eater* is a fair substitute for the 'real deal' that is *Monster Hunter* but one that doesn't quite stack up to the best-in-class hunters. It's worth noting that the European version also comes with *Resurrection* (a port of the original game), whereas the two are available separately on the US store – at just $20, *Resurrection* alone is a more attractive proposition, especially since its sequel doesn't add an awful lot on a gameplay level. While *Toukiden* is still king of the hunt on PS4, anyone looking for something that deviates from the 'traditional' hunting format or those who wouldn't mind a little more JRPG flavour may find a suitable replacement here.

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Bandai Namco

DEVELOPER
In-house

PSN PRICE
£49.99

PLAYERS
1-4

VERDICT

A SERVICEABLE MONSTER HUNTER SUBSTITUTE

6

PlayMag_UK scored **6** for
God Eater 2: Rage Burst

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

"IT'S CLEAR AFTER PUTTING A FEW HOURS INTO THE GAME THAT NO TWO PASSES, SHOTS OR TACKLES ARE EVER THE SAME"

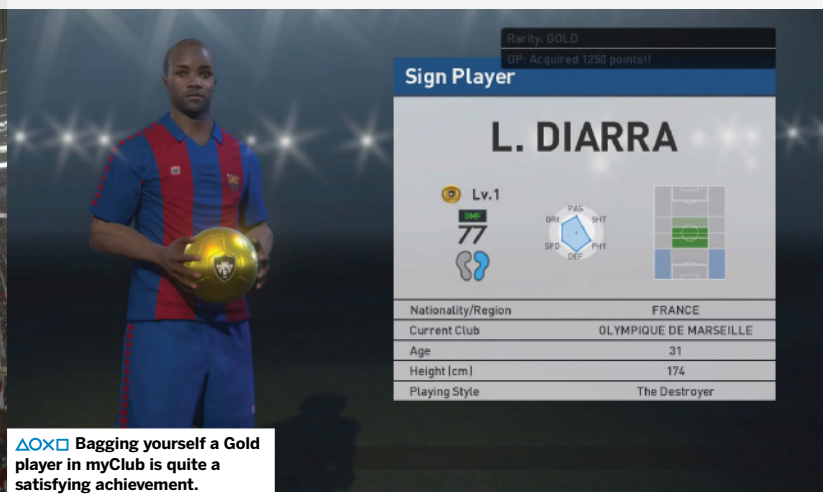
Replay Control

△○×□ Due to dynamic passing, anything can happen in a match.









△○×□ Bagging yourself a Gold player in myClub is quite a satisfying achievement.

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PES 2017

Konami's got the world in motion



PS4

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
PES Productions

PSN PRICE
£49.99

PLAYERS
1-22

It's time for legacy *PES* fans to stop talking about the PS2. It was a long time ago, but this fact of life has eluded plenty of die-hards who still like to harp on about the good old days. *PES 2017* is the best version of Konami's football sim in a while, and to compare it to the old days is a little unfair. This is a new beast, with new mechanics that represent the game coming of age in the *FOX Engine*, and overall it's a thoroughly refreshing experience.

Several gameplay systems have been under review for years now, but it feels like PES Productions has finally worked out how to get first touches right. Before now, it was either 50 pence foot shenanigans or *Sensible Soccer*-style sticky boots – neither of which have ever done the art of the first touch any justice. The new Real Touch system introduced in *PES 2017* adds a new level of unpredictability and – as a natural by-product – inconsistency that makes the brief periods you have the ball at your feet an interesting and intricate affair, whether it's your first game or your 500th.

We say brief because, as ever, *PES* is all about passing – whether building slowly from the back or utilising one-touch football in your midfield to break down even stubborn back lines. It's as hard as ever to actually run at individual players and beat them for pace or mug them off with a spin – clicking R3 and then wiggling it about while doing a million other things isn't the most elegant of systems.

But what of that elusive, proverbial '*PES* feel'? Present and correct, as it happens. There's a lot to be said for a game that rewards good timing and impeccable awareness – often this minute attention to detail is only truly prevalent in fighting games. A lot of people will struggle to see where this feeling comes from, but it's clear to us after just a few hours with the game that no two passes, shots or tackles are ever the same. We're talking about a complex algorithm that references player movement, defensive pressure, input precision and all sorts of other football alchemy that results in a dynamic, ever-changing environment that only becomes truly apparent when you hit Triangle at exactly the right time and cut four players out of the game with one pass. It's hard to articulate effectively here; you just know when you've done it.

Once again, due to *PES 2017*'s technical range of passing and slower pace, it isn't as immediately playable as a certain other football franchise. Naturally, it's open to debate as to whether this is a good or bad thing, and this sort of thing largely depends on preference. What you will get from Konami's latest effort is a deep, rewarding and, at times – if you're new to the franchise – decidedly obtuse experience that begs for you to practice for hours before really considering yourself a competent player.

Whatever happens, it's impossible to escape the fact that Konami's prowess lies less in the overall presentation of professional football than it does in well-thought-out mechanics. Despite laying claim to the rights to Camp Nou for the next few years, *PES 2017* still only has a handful of licensed teams. This means that, once again, if you want to couple the strong gameplay on offer here, you're going to have to rename them and change their kits manually. The players themselves are present and correct, but playing as East Dorsetshire against London FC just doesn't ring true with the professional display that the rest of the game purveys. Like in recent years, though, you can download team data files full of pretty decent community-created kits.

Other areas aren't quite perfect, either. For the most part, the animation team has done a great job with *PES 2017*, but there are times where animations feel wooden and lighting also seems a little off. Still, you have to judge these shortcomings against the compelling gameplay, and you soon forgive most of *PES*'s problems once you've caught an audacious high ball on the volley and smashed it past a hapless keeper.

At times it feels low-budget, but then that perfect goal happens and you forget; your senses dulled by the unstoppable one-touch move that peeled a defensive line like a big sweaty banana. That's what *PES* has always been about, and this is one of the best yet.

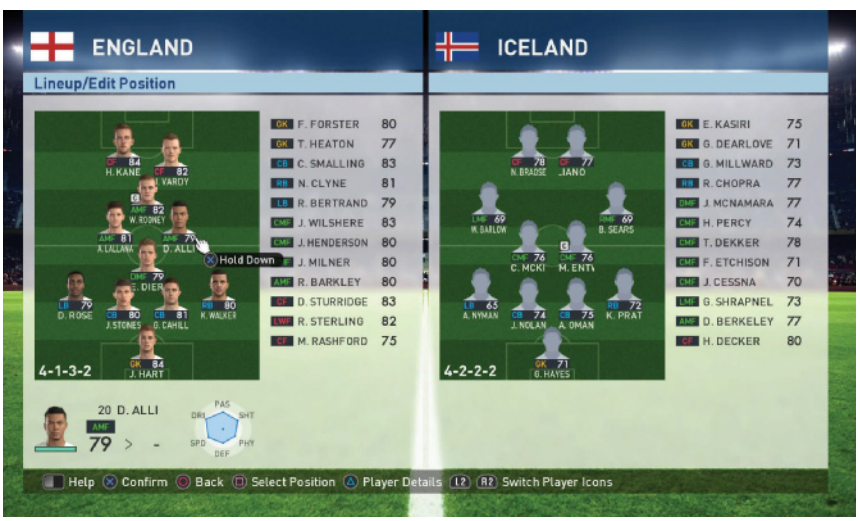
VERDICT

ANOTHER BIG STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

8

PlayMag_UK scored **8** for PES 2017

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE





△○×□ **International teams are present and correct, although we did notice some glaring discrepancies in the lineups. *FIFA* is still the way to go if it's authenticity that you're after.**



△○×□ *Virginia* doesn't waste your time. It uses cinematic tricks to move the story along, cutting scenes early once you've gleamed everything you need to and immediately placing you in a new scenario in a fashion similar to the way *Twin Peaks* or *The X-Files* tell stories.

"USES THE LANGUAGE OF VIDEOGAMES TO TELL A STORY UNLIKE ANY OTHER"



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△○×□ **There is very little interaction in *Virginia*, at least in a traditional sense. You progress forward through scenes, occasional press a button at a predetermined times and then move on. It's your ability to understand the story from the limited interaction provided that makes *Virginia* so intriguing.**

Virginia

Powerful and experimental – is this the future of fiction?



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
505 Games

DEVELOPER
Variable State

PSN PRICE
£7.99

PLAYERS
1

PS4

The design of many a modern videogame owes a clear debt to cinema. But this often manifests itself in the most intrinsically uninteresting form imaginable; just think about it – how often have you had camera control wrestled out of your hands, forced from active participant to a passive onlooker in a second? Those occasions where you're made to stop shooting to watch the burning bones of a helicopter twist out of the sky and into a skyscraper; it's a costly set-piece the developer just couldn't risk you missing.

While a lot of triple-A games will be content with mimicking this Michael Bay style of presentation, it won't be for emotional effect but to help fill gaps in gameplay – very few developers are confident enough to delve into the minutia of the craft. This is where *Virginia* straddles the line between success and failure, leaning on the workings of filmmakers Lev Kuleshov and Sergei Eisenstein to evoke a powerful sense of style and focus. For better of for worse, *Virginia* is a slave to the edit.

In *Virginia* it's difficult to know whether you are ever truly an active participant or merely a passive onlooker with minimal camera control all throughout. It's a clever subversion of videogame design, a first-person adventure formed around visual comprehension. Without a single word of dialogue, *Virginia* will attempt to tell a story of friendship and duty, identity and equality. After two hours in the company of its two FBI investigators —protagonist Anna Tarver and her partner Maria Halperin— on the hunt for a missing boy, it's likely you'll come away with a different interpretation of the events than the person sitting next to you.

It's a game about – as much as it is anything else – the effect of montage, where a scene's meaning is created in the edit itself. *Virginia* flashes between its scenes in a fashion that, while initially haphazard, quickly finds a satisfying rhythm. Movement triggers progress and hitting certain cues (such as approaching the correct person in a room, finding a contextual clue or walking a certain distance down a corridor) will shift location and perspective, just like the swift edits seen in TV shows. It's through the pace of the edit that you'll see that narrative unfold.

The story is told through subtlety and intuition, with your ability to discern emotion through body language and ability to see through the framing of individual moments making up the bulk of the experience. Because that's what *Virginia* is, really – an *experience*. It uses the language of videogames to tell a story that is unlike any other; a predefined narrative in which you activate progression and



witness the effects. *Virginia* is as unique as it is inspired, a videogame that puts you in the shoes of an editor – letting *you* decide the shot, offering interaction at a narrative level as opposed to systemic or mechanical one. It isn't for everybody, and it doesn't always work as intended, but if you're willing to give *Virginia* a chance for what it is, you might just get a glimpse into the next logical progression for interactive entertainment.

VERDICT

AN INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE UNLIKE ANY OTHER

8 PlayMag_UK scored **8** for Virginia

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

The Tomorrow Children

Wide of the Marx



PS4

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Q-Games

PSN PRICE
£15.99

PLAYERS
Massively Multiplayer

It's not entirely clear whether *The Tomorrow Children* is playable political commentary on communism or merely proof that the ideology really doesn't work in videogame form. For it to have a chance of succeeding, you at least need a community worth supporting and a vision of how it might grow – two key factors that are extremely limited here. The former is impossible with the game's bizarre net code, which sees citizens pop in and out sporadically, and without being able to see the constant busywork of others, your own feels less gratifying. As for the latter point, minimal options and potential for town improvement mean that no matter how much you put in, there's still only so much each area can grow to reflect the efforts of its citizens. So with no community spirit beyond what you enforce yourself by playing with friends and no endgame beyond some slightly better looking buildings, the grind of running menial task after menial task simply never feels worth the effort.



'Laborious' is absolutely the right word for what *The Tomorrow Children* presents as gameplay, because it *is* work. You'll mine for a few different kinds of resources, run on treadmills to generate power, solve tedious tile puzzles to add generic buildings to your generic town... the closest the game lets you get to actual fun is when blasting the strange B-movie beasties that periodically make moves on your homestead but even then, it's all so stodgy and unsatisfying that it actively works against the experience – it's a reminder that you're playing a videogame and that blasting monsters is an itch that countless other games are far better equipped to scratch. It must be said that there is something oddly cathartic to the general gameplay loop, but the same can be said of all manner of F2P games, making *The Tomorrow Children* something we'd suggest at least trying when it does eventually go free-to-play (current paid users can actually spend in-game currency on F2P invites for friends, which is a pretty neat move) but right now, the cycle of tedious tasks makes it hard to recommend spending money on.

And even when it does go free-to-play, spending might not be something that is easy to avoid. Coupons, the primary in-game currency needed to replace tools, are rationed based on how hard you toil, making it hard to generate a respectable balance. Freeman Dollars, meanwhile, can be used to pick up useful perks, building blocks and far more durable tools, although this secondary currency is extremely rare in the game itself. While it might be a communism simulator at heart, its roots in capitalism couldn't be much more obvious, obnoxious or off-message.

VERDICT

IN SOVIET RUSSIA, GAME PLAYS YOU

4

PlayMag_UK scored **4** for
The Tomorrow Children

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△○×□ **Grinding without any payoff is part of the game's message, although that isn't to say that it works well in videogame format. It doesn't – you'll quickly grow tired of what is passed off as gameplay.**

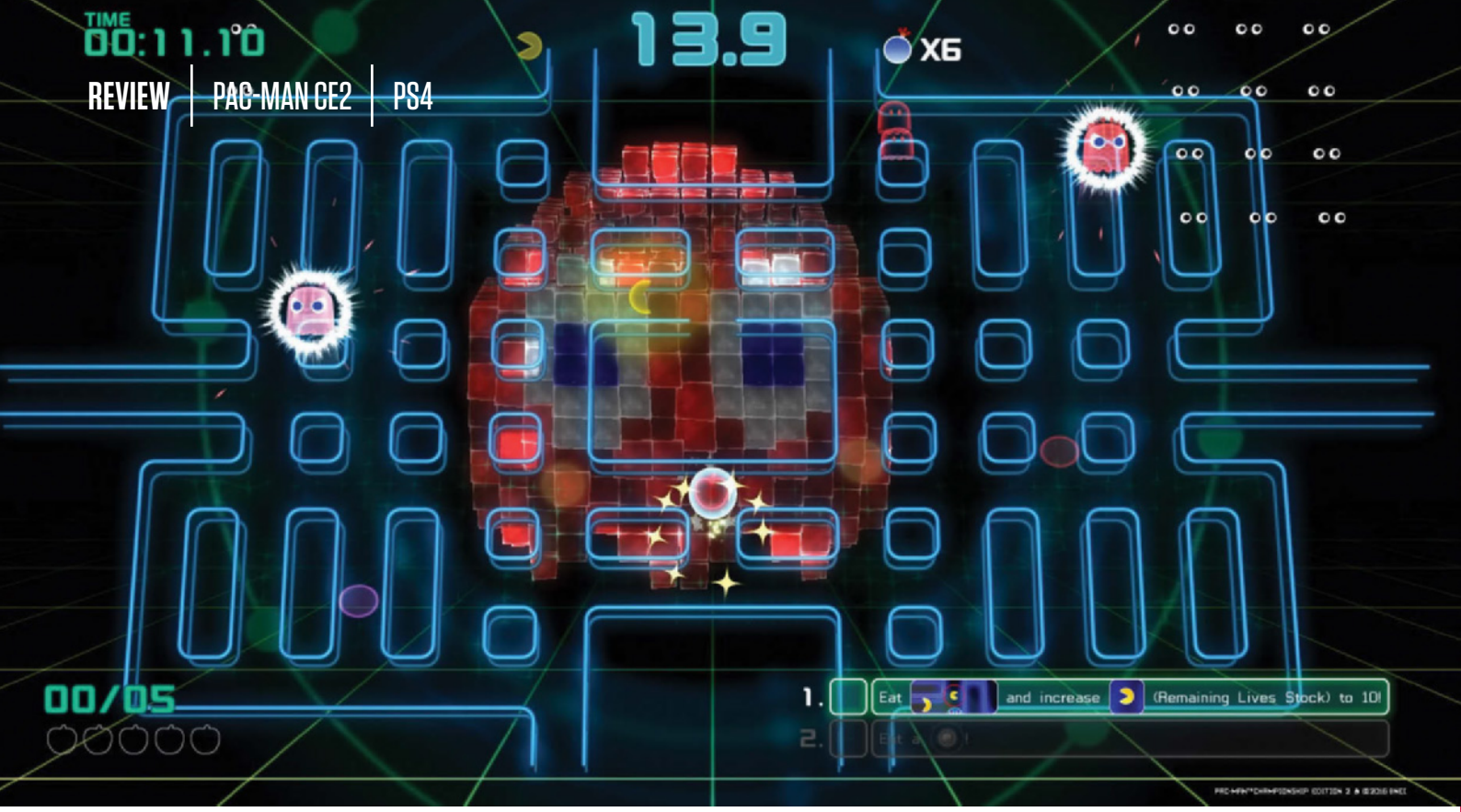
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△○×□ **Its unique and unsettling visual style is appealing at first, but the thick Vaseline-smear depth of field soon becomes annoying. The game certainly has style on its side, but it doesn't do an awful lot with it.**



"THE GRIND OF RUNNING MENIAL TASK AFTER MENIAL TASK NEVER FEELS WORTH THE EFFORT"



Pac-Man CE2

The re-energised arcade mascot suffers a difficult second album



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Bandai Namco Entertainment

DEVELOPER
In-house

PSN PRICE
£9.99

PLAYERS
1

PS4

How do you follow up a game that's universally beloved? A title that took a classic format and added just the right amount of new features to bring it feel both retro and relevant? Do you play it safe and risk being called complacent or do you take a chance and try something a little different? Bandai Namco was clearly in a gambling mood when it started work on the follow up to 2010's *Pac-Man Championship Edition DX*, and while tweaks to the recipe won't be to everyone's taste, there's definitely a decent arcade romp in there somewhere.

Okay, so let's deal with the neon-coloured elephant in the room: is it as good as *CEDX*? No, but then again how could it be? That six-year-old game is nigh perfect and exemplified that pick-up-and-play magic that rarely translates from arcade cabinet to home console. *CE2*, on the other hand, makes some pretty big updates that create a far more tactical feel. It takes time to get used to these new features, meaning your first few hours will likely stray into 'swear words that would make your mother faint' territory. There's even a Tutorial mode, necessitated by to the sheer amount of changes to the status quo.

△○×□ While it juggles a few too many elements for its own good, *CE2* still has that quintessential arcade magic about it. From the neon colour scheme to the *Tekken*-esque techno soundtrack, you can almost feel your trainers sticking to the floor.



For a start, being touched by ghosts won't cause Pac-Man to lose a life. Shock horror, right? Instead, it takes a few hits to 'aggro' them into an surly state before they suddenly start chasing you round with a vengeance. On the lower difficulties, it enables you a saving grace as you accidently turn a corner into a ghostly encounter, but ramp it up to Extreme and the sheer number of sleeping ghosts introduced become impossible to avoid so you're perpetually being hunted down by enemies you can't outrun.

Bomb jumps are also a new feature, which enable you to warp back to the 'safe zone' of each maze when things get a little too hairy. It's clearly a safety valve Bandai Namco added to negate the craziness of the later levels and difficulties, but it just doesn't fit the series and ends up feeling like an unjust Get Out Of Jail Free card. *CE2* even adds in boss battles to the mix – they're more an added twist on the end of a maze run, and while they're fun the first few times, the novelty inevitably ends up wearing thin.

CE2 introduces a campaign of sorts too, where you need to complete certain parameters to score stars and unlock the next maze. It's not entirely essential, and while it offers an enjoyable detour away from the core Score Attack mode, it ultimately represents everything wrong with *CE2*: a series of changes that only serve to dilute a formula that didn't need tweaking. And sadly, that's the last game's fault for being so damn good.

VERDICT

TOO MANY FRUITS SPOIL THE BROTH

6

PlayMag_UK scored **6** for Pac-Man Championship Edition 2

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△○×□ After popping a Power Pellet, Pac-Man gets to turn the tables on Inky, Pinky, Blinky and Clyde. Build up a big enough train of sleeping ghosts beforehand and you'll be treated to an eye-popping mega-munch animation.

"A SERIES OF CHANGES ONLY SERVE TO DILUTE A FORMULA THAT DIDN'T NEED CHANGING"

www.play-mag.co.uk



BURNOUT

FORMAT PS2 | **RELEASE DATE** 1 NOVEMBER 2001 | **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER CRITERION GAMES | **PLAY SCORE** 77% | **METACRITIC SCORE** N/A

It's hard to believe, but Burnout is already 15 years old. The game largely responsible for refining and redefining arcade racing in the modern era, join us as we return to this Criterion classic

What is it about jumping behind the wheel of an impressive concoction of metal and mechanical engineering that we find so damned appealing? All it takes is the roar of an engine and the squeal of burning rubber to edge a dangerous smile from ear to ear. Ease your finger onto the trigger, feel yourself get thrown into the back of your chair and before long you'll become mesmerised by the world whipping past you at 100mph; racing games have been a cornerstone of the videogame industry since the Seventies. They offer cerebral escapism, the opportunity to test drive some of the most powerful man-made creations ever to grace road and racetrack. But it wasn't until *Burnout* came along back in 2001 that we were given the opportunity – nay, actively encouraged – to meld an inherent need for speed with destructive and dangerous tendencies.

Looking back at *Burnout* now, it's still easy to see the appeal – and that's in spite of the washed-out polygons and questionable framerate. But this classic inspired a decade of sequels because what it established here was so undeniably strong. Developer Criterion grabbed the racing genre – typically defined by serious simulations and simple arcade experiences – and forcibly administered a shot of adrenaline right into its beating heart.

There's something impressively chaotic about *Burnout* - its sense of speed is indisputably impressive to this day. Rewind back to 2001; such a sense of movement was liberating, if not entirely terrifying. Criterion didn't just make its cars fast – it made it feel as if your grip on the road and reality around you was slipping away. The roads were packed with other drivers, travelling roadblocks that made your slick city driving as dangerous as it was exhilarating.

Never were you focused wholly on one objective. As time ticked away, edging you quicker to the checkpoint – even as rival racers weaved through traffic in front of you, stealing away precious seconds as you languished behind – you still found yourself careering away from the driving lines, heading straight into incoming headlights.

WHAT CAME NEXT?

Three great games Burnout paved the way for



SPLIT/SECOND: VELOCITY

Split/Second took *Burnout*'s celebration of destruction and ramped it up. A racing game that takes place within a reality TV show, it kept the adrenaline pumping by giving you a host of environmental cues to trigger, causing the environment to warp around the action.



NFS: MOST WANTED

Need For Speed was never the same after Criterion got its hands on it, but in a good way. The studio walked away from *Burnout*, opting to revive the *Most Wanted* series. It brought the pace and swagger of *Burnout* and merged it with the intensity of *Need For Speed*.



DANGEROUS GOLF

Wondering where Alex Ward and some of the other veteran Criterion developers are hiding? They are at Three Fields Entertainment, having just delivered *Dangerous Golf* – a chaotic mini-golf game where, you've guessed it, destruction is key to success.

That's because near-missing a passing vehicle, barrelling down the wrong side of the street and haphazardly drifting through intersections all worked to build up your heart rate meter. Eventually, a hot shot of nitrous would propel you faster still; suddenly you are equal parts mesmerised and terrified, the threat of death and the thrill of surviving were the two opposing forces that established *Burnout*'s magic grip on its players. The element of risk-and-reward was understated, but entirely unavoidable – it's a part of *Burnout*'s charm, something it would partially lose as it transitioned to open-world environments.

But what established it as legend was what happened when speed got the better of you. Hitting another vehicle didn't just slow you down in *Burnout* – it brought everything to spectacular halt. Connect with a solid object at speed and catastrophic destruction would unfold in wondrous fashion. Huge pile-ups would form and chunks of twisted metal would litter the roadside, and the destructive realism was unrivalled in the day. After years of watching cars bounce off of one another like bumper cars at a funfair, suddenly rear-ending the rival in front of you became a viable and spectacular strategy.

"THE THREAT OF DEATH AND THE THRILL OF SURVIVING WERE THE TWO OPPOSING FORCES THAT ESTABLISHED BURNOUT'S MAGIC GRIP OVER ITS PLAYERS"

KEY FACTS

- **The original working title for *Burnout* was '*Shiny Red Car*', a name used internally at Criterion as it hunted for a publisher. It's likely a reference to one of the first cars the team ever built, a shiny red Venom SX – which would later become the Sports Coupe.**

- **Ever wondered why *Burnout* never looked good on American NTSC television sets? It's because Criterion never had one to hand and didn't realise how image quality or anti-aliasing would be affected by the change in refresh rate.**



That became *Burnout*'s trademark. You are forever balancing a desire to win a race and a need to see huge scenes of chaos on the road. Racing games would never be the same again. While *Burnout 2: Point Of Impact* would bring sweeping improvements to just about everything a year later – ushering in bigger and brasher gameplay along with a suite of classic game modes – you can still return to the original release and see *Burnout*'s core hook working to perfection. Players were thrilled, of course, with the high-octane action, the ridiculous destruction and thrilling racing, and that's something that we would see filter out into every action racer in the immediate years that followed.

The higher the risk, the higher the reward; that's no doubt how director Alex Ward first pitched *Burnout*, a game that was a terrifying concept to the old guard of publishers, used to pumping out pretty but sedated on-road experiences. But *Burnout*'s achievements and legacy can be seen running through racing games still to this day, even though the series itself may be nowhere to be seen. Arcade racers may not put huge stock in destruction like they used to, but maintaining a visceral sense of speed while under constant duress is now a genre staple. *Burnout* is a classic that never went out of style; it'll leave you a twitching mess of nerves and adrenaline, but rarely will you find a game so utterly commanding of your full attention.



8 CONSEQUENCES OF GOING FULL THROTTLE

The dangers of learning to drive via Burnout



TRAFFIC LIGHT OFFENCES

You don't win races by observing the rules of the road and that means you're often committing every driving offense in the book during your time with *Burnout*. But when that timer is ticking away, when a checkpoint is in sight, the last thing you have time for is stopping for a red light. In *Burnout*, Green means Go; Yellow means Keep Going and Red means Go Even Faster.

Prison: N/A **Fine:** £1,000 **Penalty Points:** 3



VIOLATING SPEED RESTRICTIONS

Burnout is all about driving fast… *really* fast. In fact, if you don't drive fast you'll probably fail out of a race before you've had a chance to complete a single lap. With a 70mph restriction attached to most motorways, that just isn't going to fly. *Burnout* teaches you that speeding is the key to success, but taking the advice into the real world can leave you in hot water with the traffic cops.

Prison: N/A **Fine:** £1,000-£2,500 **Penalty Points:** 3-6



DRIVING WITHOUT INSURANCE

Do you remember that part at the start of Burnout where you have to go and get a loan to buy insurance for your fancy new super car? No? That's because it didn't happen. That's bad practice: it doesn't matter whether you are out for a Sunday drive or re-creating *Tokyo Drift* in your local car park, always get insurance.

Prison: N/A **Fine:** £5,000 **Penalty Points:** 3-6



VIOLATING LICENCE RULES

Just because you've got yourself a license to drive a vehicle doesn't give you license to run wild, nor will it give you permission to engage in illegal street races. This is actually a crime itself: 'driving otherwise than in accordance with a licence'. If you can afford the car you can probably afford the fine, but the points always hurt.

Prison: N/A **Fine:** £1,000 **Penalty Points:** 3-6



FAILING TO STOP AFTER AN ACCIDENT

Do you know what's awesome in *Burnout*? Crashing. You smash into a vehicle at speed and you're treated to a glory shot replaying the accident in slow motion from a cinematic angle, teaching you once and for all that crashing your vehicle always looks cool. But you never stop to report it – that's no way to act on the real streets.

Prison: 6 months **Fine:** £5,000 **Penalty Points:** 5-10



CARELESS OR INCONSIDERATE DRIVING

While you're often driving with deft precision in *Burnout*, it rarely observes the rules of road. Between all the drifting, mounting the pavement and speeding it could be reasonably suggested that everything you do in *Burnout* could be considered both careless and inconsiderate. Don't do that in real life, yeah? Good.

Prison: N/A **Fine:** £5,000 **Penalty Points:** 3-9



ENGAGING IN DANGEROUS DRIVING

Burnout is all about danger. It's about feeding your need for speed and proving that you are the road king, building up your boost bar by driving on the wrong side of the road, storming through intersections, purposefully near-missing other vehicles and generally being a nuisance. Just an FYI, this is not looked upon kindly by UK driving laws and will land you in a ton of trouble – hope you like prison!

Prison: 2 years **Fine:** £Unlimited **Penalty Points:** 3-11



CAUSING DEATH BY DANGEROUS DRIVING

Look, if you T-bone a hatchback at 200mph, smiling gleefully as you study the crash cam, watching as the other vehicle careers off into the distance – there are going to be consequences. Deadly consequences; you've most likely murdered the driver. Now, not only have you dropped positions in the race, but you're also looking at jail time. As it turns out, *Burnout* is not a very good teaching tool for young drivers.

Prison: 12 years **Fine:** £Unlimited **Penalty Points:** 3-11



INTERVIEW

BEING THE BAT

Rocksteady's Dax Ginn on letting players become the Dark Knight in PlayStation VR

What challenges did you face developing a virtual reality game for the launch of PlayStation VR?
Developing *Batman: Arkham VR* presented challenges across every department at Rocksteady. The design team had to create gameplay systems from scratch after quickly realising that a lot of the mechanics that we have used for our previous *Batman* games did not translate into VR.

The technical teams were transitioning to the *Unreal Engine 4* for the first time, which is always a significant shift for any team. The art team had to really focus on building characters and environments that were suited to VR but still deliver the kind of epic scale that gamers expect from a game set in Gotham City.

Similar challenges were faced by production, animation and UI. Our intention from the beginning was to create a VR game from the ground up, conceived and designed to play to the strengths of the technology, while delivering for gamers an experience that is as rich and authentic as our previous trilogy.

What technical benchmarks did you want to reach while developing *Arkham VR*, in terms of performance? For example, how important is ensuring a stable framerate while in virtual reality?
Ensuring a stable framerate at 60fps is a given for PSVR, so that wasn't a technical consideration that was up for compromise. We knew we had to deliver that without question. Our technical benchmarks focused more on the quality of graphic fidelity that we wanted to hit, particularly in terms of lighting and character models. For us, *Batman: Arkham VR* needed to feel like a 'next-gen' game so we overhauled our facial scanning processes in order to give us much more realistic character features and facial animation. Making a full transition to *Unreal Engine 4* also enabled us to increase the quality of our lighting and effects, which makes a huge difference to the visual quality of the game. We also set benchmarks in terms of gameplay interaction. It was important to us that this was not just a passive experience and that we were offering gamers genuine gameplay interactions.

Full freedom of movement and visceral combat are staples of Rocksteady's *Arkham* franchise – what was behind the decision to cut these from *Arkham VR*?
The defining decision on this project that we took very early on was to make *Batman: Arkham VR* a VR game, not just a VR version of a console game. Our early experimentation with combat and realistic navigation proved

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very quickly to result in a pretty uncomfortable experience for the gamer.

With these learnings at hand, we committed ourselves to focusing on the strengths of VR as a technology and we aimed to create games that make players feel like the World's Greatest Detective. This gave us the opportunity to tell a very rich murder mystery detective story, while also ensuring that players felt immersed and very comfortable in the VR world.

Do you think the Playstation VR platform will be able to support traditional triple-A length games, or is it better suited to the shorter engrossing experiences?

Only time will tell, however at this early stage I don't see any reason why VR won't be able to support longer duration games than we are currently seeing at launch.

It is a very exciting time for VR and for game developers working with this new technology, and as a studio we are very proud to have been able to make our contribution with *Batman: Arkham VR*.

How did you find working with the Move controllers – was it liberating or restrictive? They always showed great promise but never really shone...

The Move controllers are great. In our minds, the core promise of VR hinges upon the idea of independent movement of each of the player's hands. There were very few restrictions associated with designing for the Move controllers and we looked to capitalise on their functional potential wherever possible.

One of the earliest feature implementations was the ability to pick up, hold and throw a batarang, and we were pretty amazed at how intuitive it felt using the triggers on the Move controllers.

Rocksteady really seems to have a handle on what works and what doesn't in virtual reality. What lessons do you think other developers could learn from playing *Batman: Arkham VR*?

The core lesson for us has been to treat the development of our game as an exclusively VR project. This focus allowed us to pour all of our energy and effort into maximising the strengths of VR as a technology, and intelligently designing around its limitations.

It has also been massively beneficial to create a *Batman* game which provided the opportunity to develop moments of awesome superhero empowerment that are magnified by VR in a way that has to be seen to be believed.

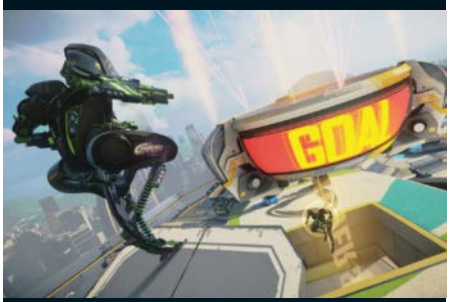
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RIGS: PSVR'S BEST GAME?



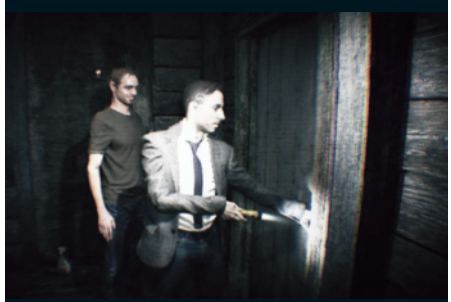
WE'RE ABSOLUTELY LOVING this, so we're going to make a video about how good it is. If we can just stop playing long enough, that is.

BATTLEFIELD 1



ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER big FPS showdown. Can EA's returning hero see off two *COD* releases AND *Titanfall 2*?

VR SHENANIGANS



WE DEFINITELY HAVEN'T been filming the office scaredy-cats playing VR horror games, and we definitely won't be uploading the results...

SHARING



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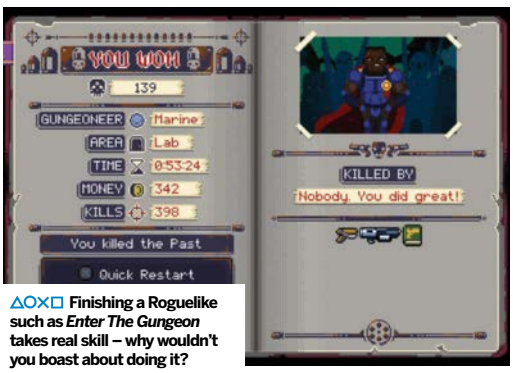
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2 Press X to open the **Play** Community, then press X again to join it. Welcome to the family!

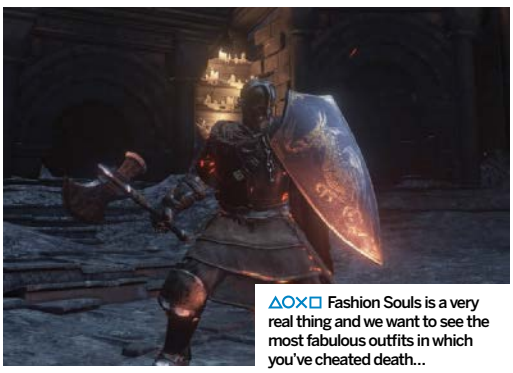
SEND US YOUR BEST SCREENS



△○×□ Made it to the summit of Felwinter Peak in *Rise Of Iron*'s new hub? Post a pic to show the world how good you are at climbing virtual mountains!



△○×□ **Finishing a Roguelike such as *Enter The Gungeon* takes real skill – why wouldn't you boast about doing it?**

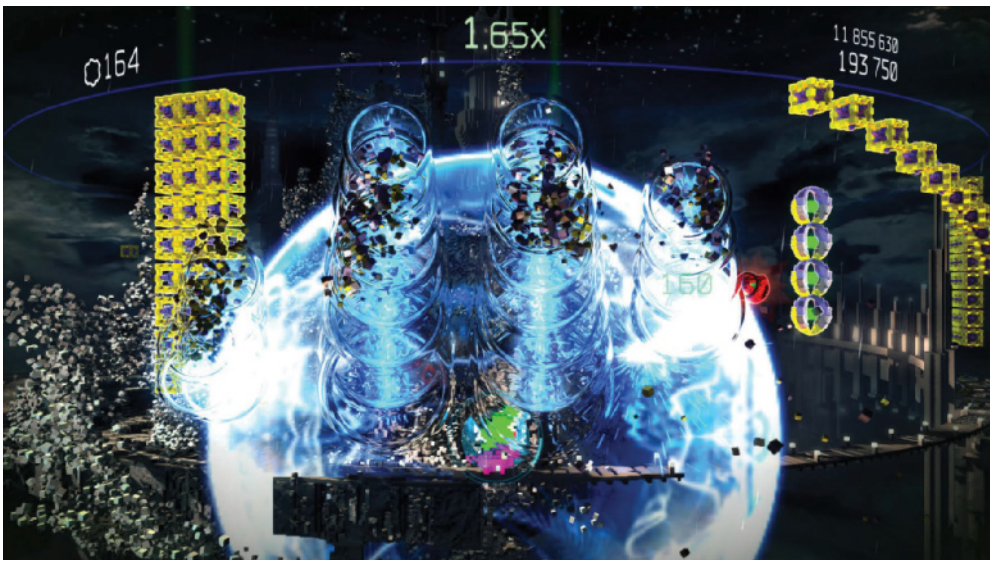


△○×□ Fashion Souls is a very real thing and we want to see the most fabulous outfits in which you've cheated death...

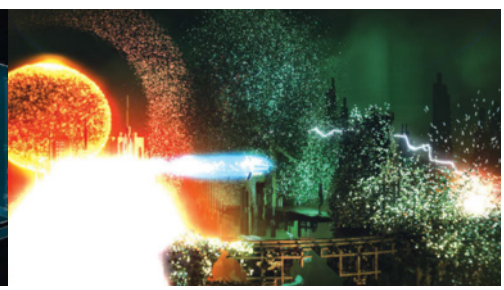
YOU HAVEN'T PLAYED...?

RESOGUN

It's been three years since PS4 was released, so new owners might not be aware of this stylish shooter, which was a real standout game in the launch lineup. Here's why...







■ **IF YOU WERE** there on day one, ready with a shiny new PS4 and a Plus subscription, you'll already know the joys of *Resogun*. But to those of you who have joined us since – welcome, by the way! – the countless newer games on the store have probably forced Housemarque's masterpiece into relative obscurity by now. We can't let that stand.

Similar in terms of gameplay to arcade classic *Defender*, *Resogun* updates that formula for a new generation and today, various cheap and even free DLC packs and updates have made it a far more fleshed-out game than it was back at launch. There are loads of new modes, challenges and options (including a wonderful Photo Mode), as well as the ability to craft and pilot your own custom ships.

The core concept is simple and you'll hear the one rule you need spoken from the controller every time you start a game. "Save the last humans," it calmly advises, which you do by grabbing the little green wandering dudes before they get abducted by enemy ships and tossing them into a safe zone. Bonus style points if you *literally* toss them, too.

But of course, it's not that simple. The screen is pretty much always full of loads of enemies and hazards, each exploding into its component voxels when destroyed and in time coating the floor of the stage in beautiful debris. Trigger Armageddon by clearing a stage and you'll get to see this carnage explode around you in beautiful slow motion. A classic arcade-style experience, *Resogun* is ace.

TOP TIPS

Three of the best ways to save the last humans



SEND THEM FLYING

Throwing humans into the safe zone saves precious time to reach the next ones – master this skill early.



BOOST POWER

Your speed boost isn't just for mobility. Plough through enemies and you'll destroy them while refilling your boost.



SAVE YOUR BOMBS

While they're a nice safety net, bombs are best used to free captured humans when you can't reach them in time.

EXPLORE THE TECH INSIDE

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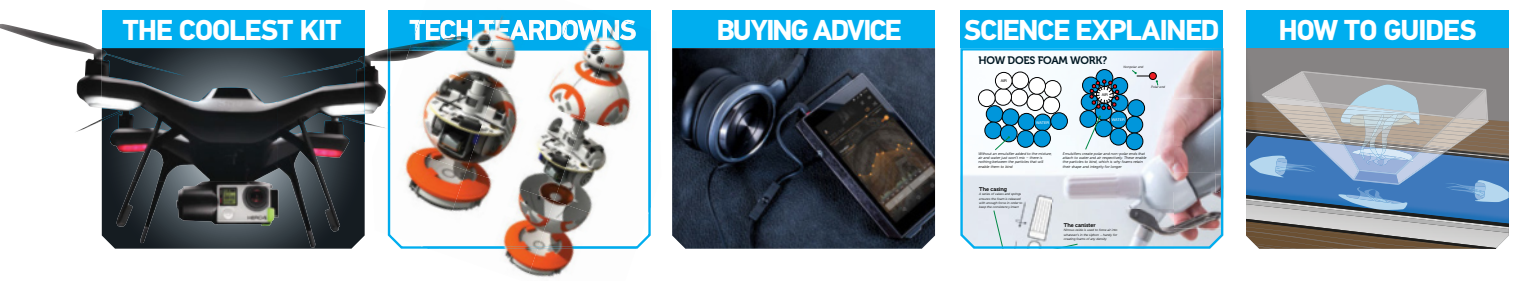


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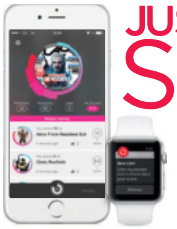
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LET'S PLAY... VR GAMES



LUKE ALBIGÉS
REZ INFINITE

10 PSVR launched with a definitive version of one of my favourite games ever – what else was I going to pick? Strap on the headset and you're in for an experience like nothing you've ever seen. Well, except *Rez*.



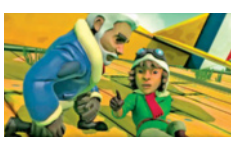
ANDY SALTER
SKYRIM

10 Annoyingly, the remastered PS4 version of *Skyrim* will be playable on a virtual screen while using the PlayStation VR headset so we had to let Andy have this on a technicality. We won't be so kind next month...



DREW SLEEP
RIGS

9 It was overwhelming at first but once my brain (and body) adapted to the pace of this mech sports game, it quickly became my favourite of all of the launch titles. Don't worry, *Thumper* – I still love you too.



PAUL WALKER-EMIG
WAYWARD SKY

7 I'm a big fan of narrative-led games, so this 'look-and-click' adventure had me intrigued. Turns out it's pretty good, albeit a little on the simple side. Still, it shows what can be done with the genre in VR.

PS4



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Abzu	273	7
Alekhine's Gun	**270**	**3**
Alien: Isolation	249	9
Alienation	**270**	**8**
Amplitude	266	8
Arslan: The Warriors Of Legend	**268**	**5**
Assassin's Creed Chronicles: China	257	7
Assassin's Creed Chronicles: India	**266**	**7**
Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	237	8
Assassin's Creed Syndicate	**264**	**4**
Assassin's Creed: Unity	251	6
Axiom Verge	**256**	**9**
Batman: Arkham Knight	258	9
Batman: The Telltale Series – Episode One	**274**	**4**
Battleborn	271	6
Battlefield 4	**238**	**8**
Battlefield Hardline	256	7
Blazblue Chronophantasma Extend	**264**	**9**
Bloodborne	256	9
Bloodborne: The Old Hunters	**265**	**9**
Bound	274	7
Bound By Flame	245	6
Broforce	**268**	**6**
Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare	251	8
Call Of Duty: Black Ops III	**264**	**8**
Call Of Duty: Ghosts	238	7
Child Of Light	**244**	**7**
CounterSpy	248	5
DariusBurst: Chronicle Saviours	**266**	**8**
Dark Souls III	269	9
Day Of The Tentacle Remastered	**269**	**8**
Daylight	245	2
Dead Nation: Apocalypse Edition	**242**	**7**
Dead Or Alive 5: Last Round	254	7
Destiny	**249**	**9**
Destiny: House Of Wolves	258	8
Destiny: The Dark Below	**252**	**7**
Destiny: The Taken King	262	9
Deus Ex: Mankind Divided	274	6
Devil May Cry 4: Special Edition	**258**	**8**
Diablo III: Reaper Of Souls	248	9
Dirt Rally	269	9
Disney Infinity 2.0	**249**	**8**
Divinity: Original Sin Enhanced Edition	264	8
Don't Starve	**240**	**8**
Doom	**271**	**8**
Dragon Age: Inquisition	251	8
Dragon Ball Xenoverse	**255**	**5**
Dragon Quest Heroes	263	8
Driveclub	**250**	**8**
Dying Light	254	9
Dynasty Warriors 8 XLCE	**243**	**8**
EA Sports UFC	246	7
EA Sports UFC 2	**269**	**8**
Enter The Gungeon	269	8
Ether One	**258**	**8**
Everybody's Gone To The Rapture	261	8
Evolve	**254**	**6**
F1 2015	260	8
Fallout 4	**264**	**9**
Far Cry 4	251	8
Far Cry Primal	**268**	**8**
Fez	**243**	**10**
FIFA 15	**249**	**8**
FIFA 16	262	9
Final Fantasy Type-0	**255**	**8**
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	243	9
Firewatch	**267**	**6**
Furi	272	8
Game Of Thrones: Iron From Ice	**253**	**8**
Geometry Wars 3: Dimensions	252	9
God Of War III Remastered	**260**	**8**
Grand Theft Auto V	**251**	**10**
Grim Fandango Remastered	**254**	**8**
Guilty Gear Xrd -Revelator-	272	9
Guilty Gear Xrd -SIGN-*	**253**	**9**
Guitar Hero Live	264	8
Hardware: Rivals	266	5
Headlander	**273**	**6**
Hitman	**268**	**9**
Hohokum	248	8
Homefront: The Revolution	**271**	**6**
Hotline Miami 2: Wrong Number	255	9
I Am Setsuna	273	8
inFamous: First Light	**249**	**5**
inFamous: Second Son	242	8
Invisible, Inc.	**270**	**9**
Just Cause 3	265	7
JStars Victory VS+	**260**	**6**
Killzone Shadow Fall	238	8
Killzone Shadow Fall: Intercept	**246**	**8**
King Of Fighters XIV	274	7
King's Quest: A Knight To Remember	261	8
Knack	**238**	**6**
Lara Croft And The Temple Of Osiris	252	5
Lego Batman 3: Beyond Gotham	**252**	**6**
Lego Dimensions	263	7
Lego Marvel's Avengers	267	6
Lego Marvel Super Heroes	**238**	**8**
Lego Jurassic World	258	7
Lego Star Wars: The Force Awakens	**273**	**6**
Lego The Hobbit	**244**	**6**
LittleBigPlanet 3	251	9
Lords Of The Fallen	**251**	**7**
Lumo	271	7
Madden '16	**262**	**8**
Madden '17	274	9
Mad Max	**262**	**4**
Mercenary Kings	244	8
Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes	**242**	**8**
Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain	261	9
Middle-earth: Shadow Of Mordor	**250**	**8**
Mirror's Edge: Catalyst	**272**	**6**
Mortal Kombat X	257	9
Murdered: Soul Suspect	**246**	**4**
N++	261	8
Naruto Shippuden Ultimate Ninja Storm 4	**267**	**8**
NBA 2K15	250	8
Need For Speed	**264**	**5**
Need For Speed Rivals	238	8
NHL 15	**249**	**6**
No Man's Sky	274	8
Not A Hero	267	6
Nuclear Throne	**266**	**8**
Octodad: Dadliest Catch	244	6
Outlast	**241**	**7**
Overcooked	**273**	**9**
Overwatch	271	8
Oxenfree	**271**	**6**
PES 2015	250	9
PES 2016	**262**	**9**
Plants Vs Zombies: Garden Warfare	248	7
Plants Vs Zombies: Garden Warfare 2	**268**	**8**
Prison Architect	273	8
Project Cars	258	6
Rainbow Six Siege	**265**	**8**
Ratchet & Clank	269	8
République	268	7
Resident Evil HD	**253**	**8**
Resident Evil Revelations 2	256	7
Resogun	**238**	**9**
Resogun Heroes	247	9
Rock Band 4	**263**	**7**
Rocket League	260	8
Rogue Legacy	**248**	**9**
Rory McIlroy PGA Tour	260	5
Salt And Sanctuary	269	8
Sébastien Loeb Rally Evo	**267**	**5**
Severed	270	8
Sheltered	**270**	**9**
Sherlock Holmes: The Devil's Daughter	**272**	**6**
Shovel Knight	258	9
Skylanders Superchargers	**263**	**7**
Skylanders Swap Force	238	7
Skylanders Trap Team	**250**	**7**
SOMA	262	8
Star Ocean: Integrity And Faithlessness	**273**	**6**
Star Wars Battlefront	**265**	**6**
Street Fighter V	267	9
Strider	**242**	**6**
Super Time Force Ultra	262	9
Switch Galaxy Ultra	**253**	**8**
Tales From The Borderlands: Zer0 Sum	252	7
Tearaway Unfolded	**262**	**7**
Teslagrad	**253**	**7**
The Amazing Spider-Man 2	245	2
The Banner Saga 2	**272**	**8**
The Binding Of Isaac: Rebirth	251	9
The Crew	**252**	**5**
The Evil Within	250	8
The Last Of Us Remastered	**247**	**10**
The Order: 1886	**254**	**8**
The Vanishing Of Ethan Carter	260	8
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt	**257**	**10**
The Witness	**267**	**10**
Thief	241	7
This War Of Mine: The Little Ones	**267**	**7**
Tiny Brains	240	6
Titan Souls	**257**	**7**
Tom Clancy's The Division	268	9
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 5	**263**	**3**
TrackMania Turbo	269	8
Transformers: Devastation	**263**	**8**
Transformers: Rise Of The Dark Spark	247	3
Transistor	245	9
Trials Fusion	**244**	**8**
Ultra Street Fighter IV	258	8
Umbrella Corps	**272**	**3**
Uncharted 4: A Thief's End	**270**	**10**
Uncharted: The Nathan Drake Collection	**263**	**8**
Unravel	267	7
Until Dawn	**261**	**8**
Valiant Hearts	247	6
War Thunder	**239**	**8**
Wasteland 2: Director's Cut	264	8
Watch Dogs	**245**	**8**
Warriors Orochi 3 Ultimate	249	6
Wolfenstein: The New Order	**245**	**8**
Wolfenstein: The Old Blood	258	8
WWE 2K15	**252**	**4**
WWE 2K16	264	5

PS3



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
007 Legends	225	4
2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil	**244**	**6**
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	8
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	**177**	**7**
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	7
The Adventures Of Tintin	**212**	**5**
Afro Samurai	177	6
After Burner Climax	**193**	**9**
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	7
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	**223**	**4**
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	5
Alice: Madness Returns	**207**	**6**
Alien Breed: Impact	196	8
Alien Breed 2: Assault	**201**	**8**
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	6
Aliens: Colonial Marines	**230**	**4**
Aliens Vs Predator	189	7
Alone In The Dark	**173**	**7**
Alpha Protocol	193	8
Amy	**215**	**1**
Ape Escape	208	5
Aquapazza: Aquaplus Dream Match	**239**	**7**
Aqua Panic	193	6

THIS MONTH'S NEW ENTRIES

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Madden '17	9
No Man's Sky	8
Bound	7
King Of Fighters XIV	7
Deus Ex: Mankind Divided	6
Batman: The Telltale Series – Episode One	4

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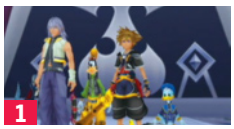
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GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Arcana Heart 3	207	7
Armored Core 4	153	6
Armored Core V	217	6
Army Of Two	164	8
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	6
Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel	231	4
Assassin's Creed	161	5
Assassin's Creed II	186	9
Assassin's Creed III	225	7
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	9
Assassin's Creed: Revelations	212	7
Assassin's Creed: Rogue	251	7
Asura's Wrath	216	7
Atelier Ayesha: The Alchemist Of Dust	230	6
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	7
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	8
Batman: Arkham City	211	9
Batman: Arkham Origins	237	8
Battle Fantasia	176	7
Battlefield 1943	182	9
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	8
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	9
Battlefield 3	212	8
Battleship	219	4
Bayonetta*	187	9
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	9
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	7
Beat Sketcher	201	8
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	8
Beyond: Two Souls	236	7
Binary Domain	216	7
Bionic Commando	179	8
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	8
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	6
BioShock	172	9
BioShock 2	189	8
BioShock Infinite	230	9
BlackSite	163	4
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	5
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	8
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	9
Blazing Angels	151	5
Blitz: The League II	172	6
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	6
Blur	193	8
Bodycount	210	5
Bomberman Ultra	185	8
Borderlands	185	8
Borderlands 2	223	9
Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel	250	6
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	7
Braid	188	9
Brothers: A Tale Of Two Sons	233	8
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	7
Brütal Legend	185	7
Bulletstorm	203	8
The Bureau: XCOM Declassified	235	5
Burnout Crash	211	7
Burnout Paradise	162	8
Burn Zombie Burn	178	8
Buzz! Quiz TV	168	8
Buzz! Quiz World	185	7
Calling All Cars	155	8
Call Of Duty 3	151	5
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	6
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	9
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	9
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	8
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	9
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	8
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	8
Call Of Juarez: Gunslinger	232	8
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	3
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	7
Castle Crashers	200	9
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	7
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	9
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2	241	8
Cars 2	208	6
The Cave	230	7
Catherine	215	6
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	8
Civilization Revolution	168	9
Clash Of The Titans	193	6
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	6
The Club	163	8
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	9
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	8
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	6
Commander's Challenge	185	6
Command & Conquer	175	4
Conan	160	7
Condemned 2	165	7
Costume Quest	199	7
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	223	9
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	3
Cross Edge	182	5
Crystal Defenders	184	4
Crysis 2	204	7
Crysis 3	230	6
Cubixx HD	207	7
The Cursed Crusade	211	4
Damnation	181	3
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	3
Dante's Inferno	189	8
The Darkness	154	9
The Darkness II	215	7
Dark Sector	165	6
Dark Souls	211	9
Dark Souls II	242	9
Darkstalkers Resurrection	230	8
Dark Void	188	8
Darksiders	188	8
Darksiders II	221	8
DC Universe Online	202	8
de Blob 2	203	6
Dead Or Alive 5	223	7
Dead Island	210	7
Dead Island: Riptide	231	6
Dead Rising 2	197	8
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	6
Dead Space	172	9
Dead Space 2	201	9
Dead Space 3	228	7
Dead Space: Extraction	203	8
Dead Space: Ignition	199	4
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	6
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	231	8
Deadpool	233	6
DeathSpank	195	8
Def Jam: Icon	151	6
Def Jam Rapstar	199	7
Defiance	231	5
Demon's Souls	193	9
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	2
Derrick The Deathfin	227	7
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	9
Devil May Cry 4	163	9
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	8
Diablo III	235	9
DiRT 3	206	8
DiRT Showdown	219	7
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	8
Dishonored	224	9
Disney Infinity	235	8
DJ Hero	186	9
DJ Hero 2	198	8
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	3
Doom 3: BFG Edition	225	6
DmC Devil May Cry	227	9
Dragon Age: Origins	186	8
Dragon Age II	203	6
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	4
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	6
Dragon's Crown	235	8
Dragon's Dogma	218	8
Driver: San Francisco	209	7
Duke Nukem Forever	207	3
Dungeon Siege III	206	8
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	5
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	4
Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires	230	4
Dynasty Warriors 8	234	7
EA Sports Active 2	200	8
EA Sports MMA	198	8
Eat Lead	178	3
echochrome	169	8
echochrome II	202	8
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	6
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	9
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	9
Elefunk	170	4
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	7
Enchanted Arms	152	6
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	8
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	5
Eternal Sonata	176	8
Eufloria	212	8
Everybody's Golf 5	158	8
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	9
Explodemon	203	7
Eye Of Judgment	159	6
EyePet	185	8
F1 2012	223	7
F1 Race Stars	226	6
FaceBreaker	170	5
Fairy Fencer F	250	4
Fallout 3	173	10
Fallout: New Vegas	198	8
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	3
Far Cry 2	172	7
Far Cry 3	226	8
Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon	231	8
Fat Princess	183	6
FEAR	151	8
FEAR 2: Project Origin	176	8
FEAR 3	208	6
FIFA 13	223	8
FIFA 14	236	9
The Fight	199	4
Fight Night Champion	203	8
Fight Night Round 3	151	8
Fight Night Round 4	181	8
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	236	8
Final Fantasy XIII	190	8
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	8
Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns	240	8
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	5
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage 2	230	5
Flight Control HD	198	8
Flock!	179	7
Folklore	158	6
Front Mission Evolved	198	5
Fuel	180	4
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	6
Fuse	232	7
Game Of Thrones	220	3
Gatling Gears	207	6
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	3
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	8
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	6
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	8
GI Joe	183	2
The Godfather	151	3
The Godfather II	178	4
God Of War III	190	9
God Of War: Ascension	230	9
God Of War Collection*	188	9
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	7
Gotham City Imposters	216	7
Gran Turismo 5	200	8
Gran Turismo 6	239	8
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	9
Grand Theft Auto V	236	10

*denotes import review

TEN YEARS AGO

BEST REVIEWS (146)



1 **Kingdom Hearts II (92%)**



2 **Splinter Cell: Double Agent (88%)**



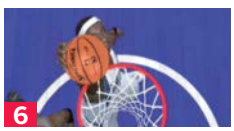
3 **Canis Canem Edit (87%)**



4 **Destroy All Humans! 2 (87%)**



5 **Killzone Liberation (83%)**



6 **NBA 2K7 (83%)**



7 **Pro Evolution Soccer 6 (79%)**



8 **FIFA '07 (79%)**



9 **Wild Arms 4 (78%)**



10 **MotoGP (75%)**

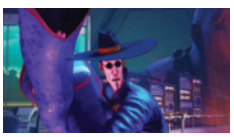
PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LOVE...



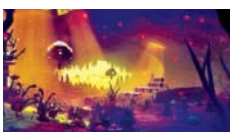
VALUE FOR MONEY
PLAY: THE WITCHER 3
Grab the recently released Game Of The Year edition of CDPR's stellar action-RPG and you'll struggle to ever run out of things to do. There are literally hundreds of hours of awesome gameplay here.



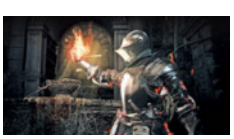
EIGHTIES CARTOONS
PLAY: TRANSFORMERS DEVASTATION
It was free on PS Plus recently, so you've got no excuse not to give this frenetic Platinum action game a go. It's packed with love for the source material, plus it plays really well too.



SUPPORTING E-SPORTS
PLAY: STREET FIGHTER V
While some of the new DLC packs might seem a little on the expensive side, revenue will directly contribute to prize pools for major tourneys and help keep the pro circuit going.



CHILLED EXPLORATION
PLAY: NO MAN'S SKY
Taken for what it actually *is* rather than what it was expected to be, Hello Games' endless space sim is a unique and gentle delight. Don't let the online hate deter you from giving it a go for yourself.



HAVING A BAD TIME
PLAY: DARK SOULS III
We mean this in the nicest possible way, of course – the series' brutal difficulty is what makes it so refreshing today, and this outing has some of the toughest bosses in the franchise so far. You have been warned...

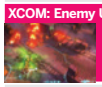
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Greed Corp	**191**	**7**
Grid 2	232	7
Grid Autosport	**246**	**6**
GTI Club+	174	7
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	**191**	**9**
Guardians Of Middle-earth	227	7
Guitar Hero III	**160**	**9**
Guitar Hero 5	184	8
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	7
Guitar Hero Metallica	**179**	**8**
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	6
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	**197**	**7**
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	9
Gundemonium Collection	**197**	**8**
Gunstar Heroes	181	8
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	**182**	**6**
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	3
Haze	**167**	**6**
Heavenly Sword	157	7
Heavy Rain	**189**	**9**
Heavy Weapon	187	7
Heroes Over Europe	**184**	**4**
Hitman: Absolution	225	9
Hitman HD Trilogy	**230**	**7**
Homefront	203	6
The House Of The Dead 4	**218**	**8**
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	7
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	**207**	**5**
Hustle Kings	190	8
Hyperdimension Neptunia	**202**	**2**
I Am Alive	217	6
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus HD	**210**	**9**
The Incredible Hulk	168	5
inFamous	**180**	**8**
inFamous 2	207	8
Inferno Pool	**181**	**8**
Injustice: Gods Among Us	231	8
Inversion	**220**	**4**
Iron Man	166	5
Iron Man 2	**193**	**5**
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	8
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	**187**	**5**
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	6
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	**187**	**6**
JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: All Star Battle	244	8
Journey	**216**	**9**
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	7
Jurassic Park: The Game	**194**	**6**
Just Cause 2	190	8
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	**160**	**7**
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	7
Katamari Forever	**184**	**8**
Kick-Ass The Game	194	6
Killer Is Dead	**235**	**7**
Killzone 2	176	9
Killzone 3	**202**	**8**
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX	236	8
Kingdom Hearts 2.5 HD ReMIX	**252**	**9**
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	7
The King Of Fighters XII	**182**	**7**
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	8
Kung Fu Panda 2	**207**	**2**
Kung Fu Rider	196	6
Lair	**158**	**5**
LA Noire	206	9
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	**198**	**9**
The Last Guy	171	9
Last Rebellion	**191**	**4**
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	5
Legendary	**173**	**6**
Lego Batman	173	6
Lego Batman 2	**221**	**8**
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	7
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	**213**	**6**
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	7
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	**187**	**7**
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	7
Lego Rock Band	**187**	**8**
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	7
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	**204**	**8**
Lego The Lord Of The Rings	227	7
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	**180**	**2**
Limbo	209	9
LittleBigPlanet	**172**	**9**
LittleBigPlanet 2	**201**	**10**
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	8
Lollipop Chainsaw	**221**	**7**
London 2012	221	4
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	**199**	**6**
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	5
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	**213**	**4**
Lost Planet 2	192	8
Lost Planet 3	**236**	**5**
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	6
Madagascar 3	224	3
Madden NFL 12	**209**	**8**
Madden NFL 13	223	8
Madden NFL Arcade	**188**	**5**
Mafia II	196	8
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	**202**	**8**
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	7
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	**199**	**7**
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	9
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	**202**	**8**
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	6
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	**185**	**6**
Max Payne 3	219	7
Mass Effect 2	**201**	**10**
Mass Effect 3	216	9
Medal Of Honor	**198**	**8**
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	8
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	**225**	**7**
Mega Man 9	172	7
Mega Man 10	**192**	**8**
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	7
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	**228**	**9**



Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance is another world-class entry in gaming's most fundamentally playable genre.

Metal Gear Solid 4	167	9
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	**214**	**9**
Metro: Last Light	231	6
Michael Jackson: The Experience	**205**	**5**
Microbot	202	5
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	**173**	**8**
Mindjack	202	3
Minecraft	**240**	**9**
Mini Ninjas	184	8
Mirror's Edge	**173**	**7**
MLB: The Show 14	245	9
ModNation Racers	**192**	**8**
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	9
Mortal Kombat	**205**	**8**
Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe	173	6
MotoGP 13	**233**	**7**
Motorhead	173	6
MotorStorm	**151**	**9**
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	7
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	**172**	**9**
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	5
MX Vs ATV Alive	**206**	**4**
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	6
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	**174**	**6**
Naruto Shippuden: UNS Generations	217	5
Naruto Shippuden: UNS 3	**230**	**8**
Naughty Bear	195	6
NBA 2K12	**211**	**8**
NBA 2K13	224	8
NBA Jam	**200**	**6**
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	6
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	**199**	**9**
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	225	9
Need For Speed ProStreet	**161**	**8**
Need For Speed Shift	184	8
Need For Speed: The Run	**213**	**6**
Need For Speed Undercover	173	7
NeverDead	**215**	**3**
Nier	192	6
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	**227**	**8**
NHL 12	210	7
NHL 13	**223**	**7**
NiGHTS Into Dreams...	224	7
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	**154**	**8**
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	8
Ninja Gaiden 3	**217**	**6**
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	231	8
Noby Noby Boy	**177**	**8**
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	8
Nucleus	**155**	**8**
Okami HD	225	9
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	**224**	**6**
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	7
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	**205**	**7**
The Orange Box	161	9
Outland	**207**	**7**
OutRun Online Arcade	180	8
Overlord II	**181**	**6**
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	9
Pain	**183**	**6**
Payday: The Heist	213	8
Payday 2	**235**	**8**
Peggle	189	9
Persona 4 Arena Ultimax	**250**	**9**
PES 2012	210	7
PixelJunk 4am	**220**	**4**
PixelJunk Eden	**169**	**6**
PixelJunk Shooter	187	9
PixelJunk Shooter 2	**204**	**9**
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	7
PixelJunk Racers	160	7
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	**225**	**8**
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	5
Poker Night 2	**232**	**5**
Portal 2	**205**	**10**
Prince Of Persia	174	8
Prince Of Persia: Classic	**173**	**6**
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	6
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	**200**	**8**
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	4
Prototype	**181**	**7**
Prototype 2	219	7
Puddle	**216**	**7**
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	4
Puppeteer	**236**	**7**
Pure	171	8
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	**181**	**6**
Quantum Of Solace	**175**	**5**
Quantum Theory	197	2
Race Driver: GRID	**167**	**8**
Rag Doll Kung-Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	8
Rage	**211**	**6**
Rainbow Six Vegas	**155**	**9**
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	8
Rango	**203**	**5**
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	8
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	**211**	**6**
Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force	227	5
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	**160**	**7**
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	9
Rayman Legends	**235**	**8**
Rayman Origins	212	8
Red Dead Redemption	**193**	**9**
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	6
Red Faction: Guerrilla	**180**	**8**
Remember Me	232	6
Renegade Ops	**211**	**7**
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	8
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	**211**	**7**
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	3
Resident Evil: Revelations HD	**232**	**7**
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	9
Resident Evil 5	**177**	**8**
Resident Evil 6	223	8
Resistance: Fall Of Man	**151**	**8**
Resistance 2	173	9
Resistance 3	**210**	**9**
Resonance Of Fate	191	8
Retro City Rampage	**228**	**7**
Ridge Racer 7	151	7
Ridge Racer Unbounded	**217**	**6**
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	8
Rise Of The Argonauts	**176**	**5**
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	5
Risen 3: Titan Lords	**248**	**2**
Risk: Factions	202	8
Rock Band Blitz	**223**	**8**
Rock Band	169	9
Rock Band 2	**179**	**9**
Rock Band 3	199	9
Rocksmith	**223**	**7**
Rogue Warrior	188	1
Rugby World Cup 2011	**209**	**4**
Rune Factory Oceans	220	5
RUSE	**197**	**8**
The Saboteur	187	6
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	**180**	**7**
Sacred 3	247	6
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Thinking, planning, failing and dying is back in fashion: *XCOM* is a phenomenal reimagining of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right.

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VITA

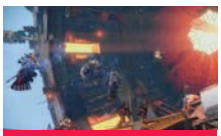


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*denotes import review

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING...

Watch out! Games!



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Destiny: Rise Of Iron

WHY (was it chosen?)

Was needed back in airlock, yeees?

LUKE ALBIGÉS

I'M AFRAID TO check my stats any more, but I'm pretty sure I must have reached the point where *Destiny* is my most-played game of all time. You don't need to tell me that it has had its problems over the last two years – I've been there on the front lines to witness them first-hand but they all fade into insignificance when that Bungie space magic all comes together as it should. Most recently, that's been in the form of the Wrath Of The Machine Raid. I banged my head against the last boss for *hours* with an under-leveled LFG team in week one, but was able to give my gear enough of a boost to finish the job early in week two and I loved every second of both triumphant victory and abject failure. Now, I'm helping others through the Raid and that's just as satisfying. Hit me up if you need a tour guide!



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Thumper

WHY (was it chosen?)

I guess I just really hate my eyes

DREW SLEEP

THIS ONE KINDA flew in from way off my radar, but I'm glad I stumbled upon it. The team describes the game as 'rhythm violence' and that label is spot on – it's as visceral a music game as I've ever seen and it just keeps getting tougher and more intense. I wasn't sure at first what VR would add to the game, but I found out soon enough – hurtling down that highway in VR is just *nuts*.


PS4'S BEST RPG YET!
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PERSONA5
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